LITTLE MASTERPIECES OF FICTION

Hoffmann

Little Masterpieces of Fiction

Edited by

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And

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VOLUME II

Ali Baba and the Forty Robbers
From the Arabian Nights' Entertainments

The Gridiron
By Samuel Lover

The Cremona Violin
By Ernst Theodor Wolfgang Hoffmann

Providence and the Guitar
By Robert Louis Stevenson

Rip Van Winkle
By Washington Irving

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LITTLE MASTERPIECES OF FICTION

ALI BABA AND THE FORTY ROBBERS

From the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments"

In a certain town of Persia there lived two brothers, one of whom was called Cassim, and the other Ali Baba. Their father at his death left them but a very moderate fortune, which they divided equally between them. It might, therefore, be naturally conjectured that their riches would be the same; chance, however, ordered it otherwise.

Cassim married a woman who, very soon after her nuptials, became heiress to a well-furnished shop, a warehouse filled with merchandise, and considerable property in land; he thus found himself on a sudden quite at his ease, and became one of the richest merchants in the whole town.

Ali Baba, on the other hand, who had taken a wife in no better circumstances than he himself was, lived in a very poor house, and had no other means of gaining his livelihood, and supporting his wife and children, than by going out to cut wood in a neighbouring forest, and carrying it about the town to sell, on three asses which formed the whole of his capital.

Ali Baba went one day to the forest, and had

very nearly finished cutting as much wood as his asses could carry, when he perceived a thick cloud of dust rising very high in the air, which appeared to come from the right of the spot where he was, and to be advancing toward him. He looked at it attentively, and perceived a numerous company of men on horseback, who were approaching at a quick pace.

Although that part of the country was never spoken of as being infested by robbers, Ali Baba nevertheless conjectured that these horsemen were of that denomination. Without, therefore, at all considering what might become of his asses, his first and only care was to save himself. He instantly climbed up into a large tree, the branches of which, at a very little height from the ground, spread out so close and thick that they were separated only in one small space. He placed himself in the midst of these with the greatest assurance of security, as he could see everything that passed without being observed. The tree itself also grew at the foot of a sort of isolated rock, considerably higher than the tree, and so steep that it could not be easily ascended.

The men, who appeared stout, powerful, and well-mounted, came up to this very rock, and there alighted. Ali Baba counted forty of them, and was very sure, both from their appearance and mode of equipment, that they were robbers. Nor was he wrong in his conjecture; for they were, in fact, a band of robbers, who, without committing any depredations in the neighbour-

hood, carried on their system of plunder at a considerable distance, and only had their place of rendezvous in that spot; and what he almost immediately saw them do confirmed him in this opinion. Each horseman took the bridle of his horse, and hung over its head a bag filled with barley, which he had brought with him; and, having all fastened their horses to something, they took their travelling-bags, which appeared so heavy that Ali Baba thought they were filled with gold and silver.

The robber who was nearest him, and whom Ali Baba took for their captain, came with his bag on his shoulder close to the rock, at the very spot where the tree was in which he had concealed himself. After the robber had made his way among some bushes and shrubs that grew there, he very distinctly pronounced these words, "*Open, Sesame*"—which Ali Baba as distinctly heard. The captain of the band had no sooner spoken them than a door immediately opened, and, after having made all his men pass before him, and go through the door, he entered also, and the door closed.

The robbers continued within the rock for a considerable time; and Ali Baba was compelled to remain on the tree and wait with patience for their departure, as he was afraid either some or all of them might come out, if he left his present situation and endeavoured to save himself by flight. He was, nevertheless, strongly tempted to creep down, seize two of their horses, mount

one and lead the other by the bridle, and thus, driving his three asses before him, gain the town. The uncertainty, however of his success, made him follow the safer mode.

At length the door opened, and the forty robbers came out: the captain, contrary to what he did when they entered, first made his appearance. After he had seen all his troop pass out before him, Ali Baba heard him pronounce these words, "*Shut, Sesame.*" Each man then returned to his horse, put on its bridle, fastened his bag, and then mounted. When the captain saw that they were all ready to proceed, he put himself at their head, and they departed the same way as they came.

Ali Baba did not immediately come down from the tree, because he thought that they might have forgotten something, and be obliged to come back, and that he should thus get into some scrape. He followed them with his eyes as far as he could, nor did he, in order to be more secure come down till a considerable time after he had lost sight of them. As he recollected the words the captain of the robbers made use of to open and shut the door, he had the curiosity to try whether the same effect would be produced by his pronouncing them. He made his way, therefore, through the bushes till he came to the door, which they concealed. He went up to it, and called out, "*Open, Sesame,*" when the door instantly flew wide open!

Ali Baba expected to find only a dark and

obscure cave, and was much astonished at seeing a large, spacious, well-lighted, and vaulted room, dug out of the rock, and higher than a man could reach. It received its light from the top of the rock, cut out in a similar manner. He observed in it a large quantity of provisions, numerous bales of rich merchandise piled up, silk stuffs and brocades, rich and valuable carpets, and, besides all this, great quantities of money, both silver and gold, some in heaps, and some in large leather bags, placed one on another. At the sight of all these things, it seemed to him that this cave had been used not only for years, but for centuries, as a retreat for robbers who had regularly succeeded each other.

Ali Baba did not hesitate long as to the plan he should pursue. He went into the cave, and as soon as he was there, the door shut; but as he knew the secret by which to open it, this gave him no sort of uneasiness. He paid no attention to the silver, but made directly for the gold coin, and particularly that which was in the bags. He took up at several times as much as he could carry, and when he had got together what he thought sufficient for loading his three asses, he went and collected them together, as they had each strayed to some distance. He then brought them as close as he could to the rock, and loaded them, and, in order to conceal the sacks, he so covered the whole over with wood that no one could perceive anything else. When he had finished all this, he went up to the door, and had

no sooner pronounced the words, "*Shut, Sesame*," than it closed; for, although it shut of itself every time he went in, it remained open on coming out only by command.

This being done, Ali Baba took the road to the town; and, when he got to his own house, he drove his asses into a small court, and shut the gate with great care. He threw down the small quantity of wood that covered the bags, and carried the latter into his house, where he laid them down in a regular manner before his wife, who was sitting upon a sofa.

His wife felt the sacks to know their contents; and, when she found them to be full of money, she suspected her husband of having stolen them, so that, when he brought them all before her, she could not help saying, "Ali Baba, is it possible that you should——" He immediately interrupted her: "Peace, my dear wife," exclaimed he, "do not alarm yourself; I am not a thief, unless that title be attached to those who take from thieves. You will change your bad opinion of me when I shall have told you my good fortune." He emptied the sacks, the contents of which formed a heap of gold that quite dazzled his wife's eyes, and, when he had done so, he related his whole adventure from beginning to end; and, as he concluded, he above all things conjured her to keep it secret.

His wife, recovering from her alarm, began to rejoice in the fortunate circumstance which had befallen them, and was going to count over the

money that lay before her, piece by piece. "What are you going to do?" said he: "you are very foolish, wife; you would never have done counting. I will immediately dig a pit to bury it in; we have no time to lose." "It is proper, though," replied the wife, "that we should know nearly what quantity there may be. I will go for a small measure in the neighbourhood, and, whilst you are digging the pit, I will ascertain how much there is." "What you want to do, wife," replied Ali Baba, "is of no use, and, if you will take my advice, you will give up the intention. However, do as you please; only remember not to betray the secret."

In order to satisfy herself, the wife of Ali Baba set off, and went to her brother-in-law, Cassim, who lived a short distance from her house. Cassim was from home, so she begged his wife to lend her a measure for a few minutes. She inquired whether she wanted a large or a small one, to which Ali Baba's wife replied that a small one would suit her. "That I will, with pleasure," said the sister-in-law; "wait a moment, and I will bring it you." She went to seek a measure; but, knowing the poverty of Ali Baba, she was curious to know what sort of grain his wife wanted to measure; she therefore put some tallow under the measure, which she did without its being perceptible. She returned with it, and, giving it to the wife of Ali Baba, apologised for having made her wait so long, with the excuse that she had some difficulty to find it.

The wife of Ali Baba returned home, and, placing the measure on the heap of gold, filled and then emptied it at a little distance on the sofa, till she had measured the whole; her husband by this time having dug the pit for its reception, she informed him how many measures there were, with which they were both very well contented. While Ali Baba was burying the gold, his wife, to prove her diligence and punctuality, went back with the measure to her sister-in-law, but without observing that a piece of gold had stuck to the bottom of it. "Here, sister," said she, on returning it, "you see I have not kept your measure long; I am much obliged to you for lending it to me."

The wife of Ali Baba had scarcely turned her back when Cassim's wife looked at the bottom of the measure, and was inexpressibly astonished to see a piece of gold sticking to it. Envy instantly took possession of her breast. "What!" said she to herself, "Ali Baba measures his gold! Where can that miserable wretch have obtained it?" Her husband, Cassim, as was before mentioned, was from home: he had gone as usual to his shop, from whence he would not return till evening. The time of his absence appeared an age to her, in the state of impatience she was then in to acquaint him with a circumstance which she concluded would surprise him as much as it had done her.

On his return home, his wife said to him,

"Cassim, you think you are rich, but you are deceived: Ali Baba must have infinitely more wealth than you are possessed of; he does not count his money as you do—he measures it." Cassim demanded an explanation of this enigma, and she unravelled it by acquainting him with the expedient she had used to make the discovery, and showing him the piece of money she had found adhering to the bottom of the measure—a coin so ancient that the name of the prince which was engraven on it was unknown to her.

Far from feeling satisfaction at the good fortune which his brother had met with to relieve him from poverty, Cassim conceived implacable jealousy on the occasion. He passed almost the whole night without closing his eyes. The next morning before sunrise he went to him. He did not treat him as a brother: that endearing appellation had been forgotten since his marriage with the rich widow. "Ali Baba," said he, addressing him, "you are very reserved as to your affairs; you pretend to be poor and miserable, and a beggar, and yet you measure your money." "Brother," replied Ali Baba, "I do not understand your meaning; pray explain yourself." "Do not pretend ignorance," resumed Cassim; and showing him the piece of gold his wife had given him, "how many pieces," added he, "have you like this, which my wife found sticking to the bottom of the measure yesterday?"

From his speech Ali Baba conjectured that Cassim, and his wife also, in consequence of his own wife's obstinacy, were already acquainted with what he was so interested to conceal from them; but the discovery was made, and nothing could now be done to remedy the evil. Without showing the least sign of surprise or vexation, he frankly owned to his brother the whole affair, and told him by what chance he had found the retreat of the thieves, and where it was situated; and he offered, if he would agree to keep it secret, to share the treasure with him.

"This I certainly expect," replied Cassim in a haughty tone; and added, "but I desire to know also the precise spot where this treasure lies concealed, the marks and signs which may lead to it, and enable me to visit the place myself, should I feel myself inclined, otherwise I will go and inform the officer of police of it. If you refuse to comply, you will not only be deprived of all hope of obtaining any more, but you will even lose that you have already taken; and I, instead, shall receive my portion for having informed against you."

Ali Baba, led rather by his natural goodness of heart than intimidated by the insolent menaces of a cruel brother, gave him all the information he desired, and even told him the words he must pronounce, both on entering the cave and on quitting it. Cassim made no further inquiries of Ali Baba; he left him with the determination of preventing him in any further views he might

have on the treasure. Full of the hope of possessing himself of the whole, he set off the next morning before break of day, with ten mules bearing large hampers, which he proposed to fill, still indulging in the prospect of taking a much larger number in a second expedition, according to the sums he might find in the cave. He took the road which Ali Baba had pointed out, and arrived at the rock and the tree which, from description, he knew to be the same that had concealed his brother. He looked for the door, and soon discovered it. Having pronounced "*Open, Sesame,*" the door obeyed; he entered, and it immediately afterward closed. In examining the cave, he was in the utmost astonishment to find much more riches than the description of Ali Baba had led him to expect, and his admiration increased as he examined each thing separately. Avaricious as he was, he could have passed the whole day in feasting his eyes with the sight of so much gold; but he reflected that he was come to load and take away his ten mules with as much as he could collect; he therefore took up a number of sacks, and, coming to the door, his mind filled with a multitude of ideas far removed from that which was of the most consequence, he found he had forgotten the important words, and that instead of pronouncing "*Sesame,*" he said, "*Open, Barley.*" He was struck with astonishment on perceiving that the door, instead of flying open, remained closed; he named various

other kinds of grain; all but the right were called upon, and the door did not move.

Cassim was not prepared for an adventure of this nature: in the imminent danger in which he beheld himself, fear took entire possession of his mind; the more he endeavoured to recollect the word "*sesame*," the more was his memory confused, and he remained as totally ignorant of it as if he had never heard the word mentioned. He threw the sacks he had collected on the ground, and paced with hasty steps backwards and forwards in the cave; the riches which surrounded him had no longer charms for his imagination.

But let us leave Cassim to deplore his own fate, for he does not deserve our compassion.

The robbers returned to their cave towards noon; and, when they were within a short distance of it, and saw the mules belonging to Cassim laden with hampers, standing about the rock, they were a good deal surprised at such a novelty. They immediately advanced full speed, and drove away the ten mules, which Cassim had neglected to fasten, and which, therefore, soon took flight and dispersed in the forest, so as to get out of sight. The robbers did not give themselves the trouble to run after the mules, for their chief object was to discover him to whom they belonged. While some were employed in examining the exterior recesses of the rock, the captain with the others alighted, and, with their

sabres in their hands, went towards the door, pronounced the words, and it opened.

Cassim, who, from the inside of the cave, heard the noise of horses trampling on the ground, did not doubt that the robbers were arrived, and that his death was inevitable. Resolved, however, to attempt one effort to escape and reach some place of safety, he placed himself near the door, ready to run out as soon as it should open. The word "*Sesame*," which he had in vain endeavoured to recall to his remembrance, was scarcely pronounced when it opened, and he rushed out with such violence that he threw the captain on the ground. He did not, however, avoid the other thieves, who, having their sabres drawn, slew him on the spot.

The first care which occupied the robbers after this execution was to enter the cave: they found near the door the sacks which Cassim, after having filled them with gold, had removed there for the convenience of lading his mules; and they put them in their places again, without observing the deficiency of those which Ali Baba had previously carried away. Deliberating and consulting on this event, they could easily account for Cassim's not having been able to effect his escape, but they could not in any way imagine how he had been able to enter the cave. They conceived that he might have descended from the top of the cave; but the opening which admitted the light was so high, and the summit of the rock so inaccessible on the outside—

besides which there were no traces of his having adopted this mode—that they all agreed it was beyond their conjecture. They could not suppose that he had entered by the door, unless he had been acquainted with the secret which caused it to open; but they felt quite secure that they alone were possessed of this secret, as they were ignorant of having been overheard by Ali Baba.

But as the manner in which this circumstance had happened was impenetrable, and their united riches were no longer in safety, they agreed to divide the carcass of Cassim into four quarters, and place them in the cave near the door—two quarters on one side, and two on the other—to frighten away any one who might have the boldness to hazard a similar enterprise; resolving themselves not to return to the cave for some time, until the stench from the corpse should be subsided. This determination formed, they put it in execution; and, when they had nothing further to detain them, they left their place of retreat well secured, mounted their horses, and set off to scour the country in such roads as were most frequented by caravans, which afforded them favourable opportunities of exercising their wonted dexterity in plundering.

The wife of Cassim, in the meantime, was in the greatest uneasiness when she observed night approach, and yet her husband did not return. She went in the utmost alarm to Ali Baba, and said to him: "Brother, I believe

you are not ignorant that Cassim is gone to the forest, and for what purpose. He is not yet come back, and night is already advancing. I fear that some accident may have befallen him."

Ali Baba had suspected his brother's intention after the conversation he had held with him, and for this reason he had desisted from visiting the forest on that day, that he might not offend him. However, without uttering any reproaches that could have given the slightest offence either to her or her husband, had he been still living, he replied that she need not yet feel any uneasiness concerning him, for that Cassim most probably thought it prudent not to return to the city until the night was considerably advanced. The wife of Cassim felt satisfied with this reason, and was the more easily persuaded of its truth, as she considered how important it was that her husband should use the greatest secrecy for the accomplishment of his purpose. She returned to her house and waited patiently till midnight; but, after that hour, her fears redoubled, and were attended with still greater grief, as she could not proclaim it, nor even relieve it by cries, the cause of which she saw the necessity of concealing from the neighbourhood. She then began to repent of the silly curiosity which, instigated by the most despicable envy, had induced her to endeavour to penetrate into the private affairs of her brother and sister-in-law. The night was spent in weeping, and at break of day she ran to them, and announced the cause

of her early visit less by her words than her tears.

Ali Baba did not wait for his sister's entreaties to go and seek for Cassim. He immediately set off with his three asses, and went to the forest. As he drew near the rock, he was astonished on observing that blood had been shed near the door; and, not having in his way met either his brother or the ten mules, he conceived no favourable omen. He reached the door, and, on pronouncing the words, it opened. He was struck with horror when he distinguished the body of his brother cut into four quarters; yet he did not hesitate on the course he was to pursue in rendering the last act of duty to his brother's remains, notwithstanding the small share of fraternal affection he had received from him during his life. He found materials in the cave to wrap up the body; and, making two packets of the four quarters, he placed them on one of his asses, covering them with sticks to conceal them. The other two asses he quickly loaded with sacks of gold, putting wood over them, as on the preceding occasion; and, having finished all he had to do, and commanded the door to close, he took the road to the city, using the precaution to wait at the entrance of the forest until night was closed, that he might return without being observed. When he got home, he left the two asses that were laden with gold, desiring his wife to take care to unload them; and having in a few words acquainted her

with what had happened to Cassim, he led the other ass to his sister-in-law.

Ali Baba knocked at the door, which was opened to him by Morgiana. This Morgiana was a female slave, crafty, cunning, and fruitful in inventions to forward the success of the most difficult enterprise, in which character Ali Baba knew her well. When he had entered the court he took off the wood and the two packages from the ass, and taking the slave aside, "Morgiana," said he, "the first thing I have to request of you is inviolable secrecy; you will soon see how necessary it is, not only to me, but to your mistress. These two packets contain the body of your master, and we must endeavour to bury him as if he had died a natural death. Let me speak to your mistress, and be attentive to what I shall say to her."

Morgiana went to acquaint her mistress, and Ali Baba followed her. "Well, brother," inquired his sister-in-law in an impatient tone, "what news do you bring of my husband? Alas! I perceive no traces of consolation in your countenance." "Sister," replied Ali Baba, "I cannot answer you, unless you will first promise to listen to me from the beginning to the end of my story without interruption. It is of no less importance to you than to me, under the present circumstances, to preserve the greatest secrecy; it is absolutely necessary for your repose and security." "Ah!" cried the sister, without elevating her voice, "this pre-

amble convinces me that my husband is no more, but, at the same time, I feel the necessity of the secrecy you require. I must do violence to my feelings. Speak; I attend."

Ali Baba then related to her all that had happened during his journey until his arrival with the body of Cassim. "Sister," added he, "here is a new cause of affliction for you, the more distressing as it was unexpected. Although the evil is without remedy, if, nevertheless, anything can afford you consolation, I offer to join the small property God has granted me to yours by marrying you. I can assure you my wife will not be jealous, and you will live comfortably together. If this proposal meets your approbation, we must contrive to bury my brother as if he had died a natural death; and this is a trust which I think you may safely repose in Morgiana, and I will, on my part, contribute all in my power to assist her."

The widow of Cassim reflected that she could not do better than consent to this offer, for he possessed greater riches than she was left with, and besides, by the discovery of the treasure, might increase them considerably. She did not, therefore, refuse his proposal, but, on the contrary, regarded it as a reasonable motive for consolation. She wiped away her tears, which had begun to flow abundantly, and suppressed those mournful cries which women usually utter on the death of their husbands, and thereby

sufficiently testified to Ali Baba that she accepted his offer.

Ali Baba left the widow of Cassim in this disposition of mind, and, having strongly recommended Morgiana to acquit herself properly in the part she was to perform, he returned home with his ass.

Morgiana did not belie her character for cunning. She went out with Ali Baba, and repaired to an apothecary who lived in the neighbourhood. She knocked at the shop door, and, when it was opened, asked for a particular kind of lozenge of great efficacy in dangerous disorders. The apothecary gave her as much as the money she offered would pay for, asking who was ill in her master's family. "Ah!" exclaimed she, with a deep sigh, "it is my worthy master, Cassim himself. No one can understand his complaint; he can neither speak nor eat."

On the following day, she again went to the same apothecary, and, with tears in her eyes, inquired for an essence which it was customary to administer only when the patient was reduced to the last extremity, and when few hopes of life were entertained. "Alas!" cried she, as she received it from the hands of the apothecary, and apparently in the deepest affliction, "I fear this remedy will not be of more use than the lozenges. I shall lose my good master!"

On the other hand, as Ali Baba and his wife were seen going backwards and forwards to the

house of Cassim in the course of the day, no one was surprised toward evening on hearing the piercing cries of his widow and Morgiana, which announced the death of Cassim. At a very early hour the next morning, when day began to appear, Morgiana, knowing that a good old cobbler lived near, who was one of the first to open his shop, went out in search of him. Coming up to him, she wished him a good day, and put a piece of gold into his hand.

Baba Mustapha, known to all the world by this name, was naturally of a gay turn, and had always something laughable to say. Examining the piece of money, as it was yet scarcely daylight, and seeing it was gold, "A good handsel," said he; "what's to be done? I am ready to do what I am bid." "Baba Mustapha," said Morgiana to him, "take all you want for sewing, and come directly with me; but on this condition: that you let me put a bandage over your eyes when we have got to a certain place." At these words, Baba Mustapha began to make difficulties. "Oh, oh!" said he, "you want me to do something against my conscience or my honour." Then putting another piece of gold into his hand, "God forbid," said Morgiana, "that I should require you to do anything that would stain your honour; only come with me, and fear nothing."

Baba Mustapha suffered himself to be led by the slave, who, when she had reached the place she had mentioned, bound a handkerchief over

his eyes, and conducted him to the house of her deceased master; nor did she remove the bandage until he was in the chamber where the body was deposited, each quarter in its proper place. Then taking off the handkerchief, "Baba Mustapha," said she, "I have brought you here that you might sew these pieces together. Lose no time, and, when you have done, I will give you another piece of gold."

When Baba Mustapha had finished his job, Morgiana bound his eyes again before he left the chamber, and, having given him the third piece of money according to her promise, and earnestly recommended him to secrecy, she conducted him to the place where she had first put on the handkerchief, and having again taken it off, she left him to return to his house, following him, however, with her eyes until he was out of sight, lest he should have the curiosity to return and watch her movements.

Morgiana had heated some water to wash the body of Cassim, and Ali Baba, who entered just as she returned, washed it, perfumed it with incense, and wrapped it in the burying-clothes with the accustomed ceremonies. The undertaker also brought the coffin which Ali Baba had taken care to order. In order that he might not observe anything particular, Morgiana took the coffin in at the door, and, having paid and sent him away, she assisted Ali Baba to put the body into it. When he had nailed down the boards which covered it, she went to the

mosque to give notice that everything was ready for the funeral. The people belonging to the mosque, whose office it is to wash the bodies of the dead, offered to come and perform their usual function, but she told them that all was done and ready.

Morgiana was scarcely returned when the Imam and the other ministers of the mosque arrived. Four of the neighbours took the coffin on their shoulders, and carried it to the cemetery, following the Imam, who repeated prayers as he went along. Morgiana, as slave to the deceased, went next, with her head uncovered, bathed in tears, and uttering the most piteous cries from time to time, beating her breast and tearing her hair; Ali Baba closed the procession, accompanied by some of the neighbours, who occasionally took the place of the others to relieve them in carrying the coffin until they reached the cemetery.

As for the widow of Cassim, she remained at home to lament and weep with the women of the neighbourhood, who, according to the usual custom, repaired to her house during the ceremony of the burial, and joining their cries to hers, filled the air with sounds of woe. In this manner, the fatal end of Cassim was so well concealed that no one in the city had the least suspicion of the affair.

Three or four days after the interment of Cassim, Ali Baba removed the few goods he was possessed of, together with the money he had taken from the robbers' store, which he conveyed

only by night, into the house of the widow of Cassim, in order to establish himself there, and thus announce his recent marriage with his sister-in-law; and, as such marriages are by no means extraordinary in our religion, no one showed any marks of surprise on the occasion.

Ali Baba had a son who had lately ended an apprenticeship with a merchant of considerable repute, who had always bestowed the highest commendations on his conduct; to this son he gave the shop of Cassim, with a further promise that, if he continued to behave with prudence, he would ere long marry him advantageously, considering his situation in life.

But let us now leave Ali Baba to enjoy the first dawn of his good fortune, and return to the forty thieves. They came back to their retreat in the forest, when the time they had agreed to be absent had expired; but their astonishment was indescribable when they found the body of Cassim gone, and it was greatly increased on perceiving a visible diminution of their treasure. "We are discovered," said the captain, "and lost beyond recovery if we are not very careful, and do not take immediate measures to remedy the evil; we shall, by insensible degrees, lose all these riches, which our ancestors, as well as ourselves, have amassed with so much danger and fatigue. All that we can at present judge of the loss we have sustained is that the thief whom we surprised at the fortunate moment when he was going to make his escape,

knew the secret of opening the door. But he was not the only one who possesses it; another must have the same knowledge. His body being removed, and our treasure diminished, are incontestible proofs of the fact. And as we have no reason to suppose that more than two people are acquainted with the secret, having destroyed one, we must not suffer the other to escape. What say you, my brave men? Are you not of my opinion?"

This proposal of the captain was thought so reasonable and proper by the whole troop that they all approved it, and agreed that it would be advisable to relinquish every other enterprise, and occupy themselves solely with this, which they should not abandon until they had succeeded in detecting the thief.

"I expected nothing otherwise, from your known courage and bravery," resumed the captain; "but the first thing to be done is, that one of you who is bold, courageous, and possessed of some address, should go to the city, without arms, and in the dress of a traveller and a stranger, and employ all his art to discover if the singular death we inflicted on the culprit whom we destroyed as he deserved, is the common topic of conversation, who he was, and where he lived. This it is absolutely necessary we should be acquainted with, that we may not do anything of which we may have to repent, by making ourselves known in a country where we have been so long forgotten, and where it is

so much our interest to remain so. But in order to inspire him with ardour who shall undertake this commission, and to prevent his bringing us a false report, which might occasion our total ruin, I propose that he should submit to the penalty of death in case of failure."

Without waiting for the rest to give their opinions, one of the robbers said: "I willingly submit, and glory in exposing my life for the execution of such a commission. If I should fail in the attempt, you will at least remember that neither courage nor good-will have been deficient in my offer to serve the whole troop."

This robber, after having received the commendation of the captain and his companions, disguised himself in such a way that no one could have suspected him to be what he in reality was. He set off at night, and managed so well that he entered the city just as day was beginning to appear. He went toward the square, where he saw only one shop open, which was that of Baba Mustapha.

Baba Mustapha was seated on his stool, with his awl in his hand, ready to begin his work. The thief went up to him, and wished him a good-morning, and, perceiving him to be advanced in years, "My good man," said he, "you rise betimes to your work: it is not possible that you can see clearly at this early hour, so old as you are; and even if it were broad day, I doubt whether your eyes are good enough to sew with."

"Whoever you are," replied Baba Mustapha,

"you do not know much of me. Notwithstanding my age, I have excellent eyes; and so you would have said had you known that not long ago I sewed up a dead body in a place where there was not more light than we have now."

The robber felt great satisfaction at having on his arrival addressed himself to a man who immediately gave him, of his own accord, that intelligence which he did not doubt was the very same he was in search of. "A dead body!" replied he, with a feigned astonishment, to induce the other to proceed; "why sew up a dead body? I suppose you mean that you sewed the shroud in which he was buried." "No, no," said Baba Mustapha, "I know what I say; you want me to tell you more about it, but you shall not know another syllable."

The thief wanted no further proof to be fully persuaded that he was in a good train to discover what he was in search of. He drew out a piece of gold, and, putting it into Baba Mustapha's hand, he said: "I have no desire to become acquainted with your secret, although I can assure you I should not divulge it, even if you had entrusted me with it. The only thing which I entreat of you is to have the goodness to direct me, or to come with me, and show me the house where you sewed up the dead body."

"Should I even feel myself inclined to grant your request," replied Baba Mustapha, holding the piece of money in hand ready to return it, "I assure you that I could not do it, and this

you may take my word for. And I will tell you the reason: they took me to a particular place, and there they bound my eyes; from thence I suffered myself to be led to the house; and when I had finished what I had to do. I was conducted back to the same place in the same manner. You see, therefore, how impossible it is that I should be of any service to you." "But at least," resumed the robber, "you must remember nearly the way you went after your eyes were bound. Pray come with me: I will put a bandage over your eyes at that place, and we will walk together along the same streets, and follow the same turnings, which you will probably recollect to have gone over before; and, as all trouble deserves a reward, here is another piece of gold. Come, grant me this favour." Saying these words, he put another piece of money into his hand.

The two pieces of gold tempted Baba Mustapha; he looked at them in his hand some time without saying a word, consulting within himself what he should do. At length he drew his purse from his bosom, and putting them in it, "I cannot positively assure you," said he, "that I remember exactly the way they took me; but, since you will have it so, come along, I will do my best to remember it."

To the great satisfaction of the robber, Baba Mustapha got up to go with him, and, without shutting up his shop, where there was nothing of consequence to lose, he conducted the robber

to the spot where Morgiana had put the bandage over his eyes. When they were arrived, "This is the place," said he, "where my eyes were bound, and I was turned the way you see me." The robber, who had his handkerchief ready, tied it over his eyes, and walked by his side, partly leading him and partly being conducted by him, till he stopped.

Baba Mustapha then said, "I think I did not go farther than this;" and he was, in fact, exactly before the house which formerly belonged to Cassim, and where Ali Baba now resided. Before he took the bandage from his eyes, the robber quickly made a mark on the door with some chalk he had for the purpose, and when he had taken it off, he asked him if he knew to whom the house belonged. Baba Mustapha replied that he did not live in that division of the town, and therefore could not give him any information respecting it. As the robber found he could gain no further intelligence from Baba Mustapha, he thanked him for the trouble he had taken, and, when he left him to return to his shop, he took the road to the forest, where he was persuaded he should be well received.

Soon after the robber and Baba Mustapha had separated, Morgiana had occasion to go out on some errand, and, when she returned, she observed the mark which the robber had made on the door of Ali Baba's house. She stopped to consider it. "What can this mark signify?" thought she; "has any one a spite against my

master, or has it been done only for diversion? Be the motive what it may, it will be well to use precaution against the worst that may happen." She therefore took some chalk, and, as several of the doors both above and below her master's were alike, she marked them in the same manner, and then went in without saying anything of what she had done either to her master or mistress.

The thief in the meantime continued on his road till he arrived at the forest, where he rejoined his companions at an early hour. He related the success of his journey, dwelling much on the good fortune that had befriended him in discovering so soon the very man who could give him the best information on the subject he went about, and which no one but he could have acquainted him with. They all listened to him with great satisfaction, and the captain, after praising his diligence, thus addressed the party: "Comrades," said he, "we have no time to lose; let us secretly arm ourselves and depart and, when we have entered the city—which, not to create suspicion, we had best do separately—let us all assemble in the great square, some on one side of it, some on the other, and I will go and find out the house with our companion who has brought us this good news; by which I shall be able to judge what method will be most advantageous."

The robbers all applauded their captain's proposal, and they were very shortly equipped

for their departure. They went in small parties of two or three together, and, walking at a proper distance from each other, they entered the city without occasioning any suspicion. The captain and he who had been there in the morning were the last to enter it, and the latter conducted the captain to the street in which he had marked the house of Ali Baba. When they reached the first house that had been marked by Morgiana, he pointed it out, saying that was the one. But as they continued walking on without stopping, that they might not raise suspicion, the captain perceived that the next door was marked in the same manner and on the same part, which he observed to his guide, and inquired whether this was the house or that they had passed. His guide was quite confused, and knew not what to answer; and his embarrassment increased when, on proceeding with the captain, he found that four or five doors successively had the same mark. He assured the captain, with an oath, that he had marked but one. "I cannot conceive," added he, "who can have imitated my mark with so much exactness; but I confess that I cannot now distinguish that which I had marked."

The captain, who found that his design did not succeed, returned to the great square, where he told the first of his people whom he met to acquaint the rest that they had lost their labour, and made a fruitless expedition, and that now nothing remained but to return to their

place of retreat. He set the example, and they all followed in the same order as they came.

When the troop had reassembled in the forest, the captain explained to them the reason of his having ordered them to return. The conductor was unanimously declared deserving of death, and he joined in his own condemnation, by owning that he should have been more cautious in taking his measures; he presented his head with firmness to him who advanced to sever it from his body.

As it was necessary for the safety and preservation of the whole band that so great an injury should not pass off unrevenged, another robber, who flattered himself with hopes of better success than he who had just been punished, presented himself, and requested the preference. It was granted him. He went to the city, corrupted Baba Mustapha by the same artifice that the first had used, and he led him to the house of Ali Baba with his eyes bound.

The thief marked it with red in a place where it would be less discernible, thinking that would be a sure method of distinguishing it from those that were marked with white. But, a short time after, Morgiana went out as on the preceding day, and, on her return, the red mark did not escape her piercing eye. She reasoned as before, and did not fail to make a similar red mark on the neighbouring doors.

The thief, when he returned to his companions

in the forest, boasted of the precautions he had taken, which he declared to be infallible, to distinguish the house of Ali Baba from the others. The captain and the rest thought with him that he was sure of success. They repaired to the city in the same order and with as much care as before, armed also in the same way, ready to execute the blow they meditated: the captain and the robber went immediately to the street where Ali Baba resided; but the same difficulty occurred as on the former occasion. The captain was irritated, and the thief in as great a consternation as he who had preceded him in the same business.

Thus was the captain obliged to return again on that day with his comrades, as little satisfied with his expedition as he had been on the preceding one. The robber who was the author of the disappointment underwent the punishment to which he had beforehand voluntarily submitted himself.

The captain, seeing his troop diminished by two brave associates, feared it might still decrease if he continued to trust to others the discovery of the house where Ali Baba resided. Their example convinced him that they did not all excel in affairs that depended on the head, as in those in which strength of arms was required. He therefore undertook the business himself: he went to the city, and, with the assistance of Baba Mustapha, who was ready to perform the same service for him which he had done for the

other two, he found the house of Ali Baba, but not choosing to amuse himself in making marks on it, which had hitherto proved so fallacious, he examined it so thoroughly, not only by looking at it attentively, but by passing before it several times, that at last he was certain he could not mistake it.

The captain, satisfied of having obtained the object of his journey by becoming acquainted with what he desired, returned to the forest, and, when he had reached the cave where the rest of the robbers were waiting his return, "Comrades," said he, addressing them, "nothing now can prevent our taking full revenge for the injury that has been done us. I know with certainty the house of the culprit who is to experience it; and, on the road, I have meditated a way of making him feel it so privately that no one shall be able to discover the place of our retreat any more than that where our treasure is deposited; for this must be our principal object in our enterprise, otherwise, instead of being serviceable, it will only prove fatal to us all. This is what I have conceived to obtain this end, and, when I have explained the plan to you, if any one can propose a better expedient, let him communicate it." He then told them in what manner he intended to conduct the affair, and, as they all gave their approbation, he charged them to divide into small parties, and go into the neighbouring towns and villages, and to buy nineteen mules and thirty-eight large leather

jars to carry oil, one of which must be full, and all the others empty.

In the course of two or three days, the thieves had completed their purchases; and as the empty jars were rather too narrow at the mouth for the purpose for which he intended them, the captain had them enlarged. Then, having made one of his men enter each jar, armed as he thought necessary, he closed them so as to appear full of oil, leaving, however, that part open which had been unsewed, to admit air for them to breathe; and the better to carry on the deception, he rubbed the outside of the jars with oil, which he took from the full one.

Things being thus disposed, the mules were laden with the thirty-seven robbers, each concealed in a jar, and with the jar that was filled with oil; when the captain, as conductor, took the road to the city at the hour that had been agreed, and arrived about an hour after sunset, as he proposed. He went straight to the house of Ali Baba, intending to knock, and request admission for the night for himself and his mules. He was, however, spared the trouble of knocking; he found Ali Baba at the door, enjoying the fresh air after supper. He stopped his mules, and, addressing himself to Ali Baba, "Sir," said he, "I have brought the oil which you see from a great distance to sell it to-morrow at the market, and, at this late hour, I do not know where to go to pass the night; if it would not occasion you much inconvenience, do me the

favour to take me in for the night; you will confer a great obligation on me."

Although Ali Baba had seen the man who now spoke to him in the forest, and even heard his voice, yet he had no idea that this was the captain of the forty robbers disguised as an oil merchant. "You are welcome," said he, and immediately made room for him and his mules to go in. At the same time, Ali Baba called a slave he had, and ordered him, when the mules were unladen, not only to put them under cover in the stable, but also to give them some hay and corn. He also took the trouble of going into the kitchen to desire Morgiana to get a supper quickly for a guest who was just arrived, and to prepare him a chamber and bed.

Ali Baba did more to receive his guest with all possible civility; observing, after he had unladen his mules, and they were taken into the stables, as he had commanded, that he was seeking for a place to pass the night in, he went to him to beg him to come into the room where he received company, saying that he could not suffer him to think of passing the night in the court. The captain of the thieves endeavoured to excuse himself from accepting the invitation under the pretence of not caring to give trouble, but, in reality, that he might have an opportunity of more easily executing what he meditated; and it was not until Ali Baba had used the most urgent persuasions that he complied with his request.

Ali Baba not only remained with his perfidious guest, who sought his life in return for his hospitality, until Morgiana had served the supper, but he conversed with him on various subjects which he thought might amuse him, and did not leave him till he had finished the repast he had provided. He then said, "You are at liberty to do as you please; you have only to ask for whatever you may want, and everything I have is at your service."

The captain of the robbers got up at the same time with Ali Baba, and accompanied him to the door, and, while the latter went into the kitchen to speak to Morgiana, he went into the court, under the pretext of going to the stable to see after his mules.

Ali Baba having again enjoined Morgiana to be attentive to his guest, and to observe that he wanted nothing, added, "I give you notice that to-morrow, before daybreak, I shall go to the bath. Take care that my bathing-linen is ready, and give it to Abdallah" (this was the name of his slave), "and make me some good broth to take when I return." After giving these orders, he went to bed.

The captain of the robbers, in the meantime, on leaving the stable, went to give his people the necessary orders for what they were to do. Beginning from the first jar, and going through the whole number, he said to each, "When I shall throw some pebbles from the chamber where I am to be lodged to-night, do not fail

to rip open the jar from top to bottom with the knife you are furnished with, and to come out; I shall be with you immediately after." The knives he spoke of were pointed and sharpened for the purpose. This being done, he returned, and, when he got to the kitchen door, Morgiana took a light, and conducted him to the chamber she had prepared for him, and there left him, first asking him if he were in want of anything more. Not to create any suspicion, he put out the light a short time after, and lay down in his clothes, to be ready to rise as soon as he had taken his first sleep.

Morgiana did not forget Ali Baba's orders: she prepared his linen for the bath, and gave it to Abdallah, who was not yet gone to bed, and put the pot on the fire to make the broth; but, while she was skimming it, the lamp went out. There was no more oil in the house, and she had not any candle. She knew not what to do. She wanted a light to see to skim the pot, and mentioned her disaster to Abdallah. "Why are you so much disturbed at it?" said he; "go and take some oil out of one of the jars in the court."

Morgiana thanked Abdallah for the hint, and, while he retired to bed in the next room to Ali Baba that he might be ready to go with him to the bath, she took the oil-can, and went into the court. As she drew near to the first jar that presented itself, the thief who was concealed within said in a low voice, "Is it time?"

Although he had spoken softly, Morgiana was

nevertheless struck with the sound, which she heard the more distinctly as the captain, when he had unladen his mules, had opened all the jars, and this among the rest, to give a little air to his men, who, though not absolutely deprived of breathing-room, were nevertheless in an uneasy situation.

Any other slave except Morgiana, in the first moment of surprise at finding a man in the jar instead of some oil, as she expected, would have made a great uproar, which might have created irremediable misfortune. But Morgiana was superior to those usually in her station: she was instantly aware of the importance of secrecy in the affair, and the extreme danger in which Ali Baba and his family were as well as herself, and also the urgent necessity of devising a speedy remedy that should be executed with privacy. Her quick imagination soon conceived the means. She collected her thoughts, and, without showing any emotion, she assumed the manner of the captain, and answered, "Not yet, but presently." She approached the next jar, and the same question was asked her; she went on to them all in succession, making the same answer to the same question, till she came to the last, which was full of oil.

Morgiana by this means discovered that her master, who supposed he was giving a night's lodging to an oil merchant only, had afforded shelter to thirty-eight robbers, including the pretended merchant, their captain. She quickly

filled her oil-can from the last jar, and returned into the kitchen; and, after having put some oil in her lamp and lighted it, she took a large kettle, and went again into the court to fill it with oil from the jar. This done, she brought it back again, put it over the fire, and made a great blaze under it with a quantity of wood; for the sooner the oil boiled, the sooner her plan, which was for the welfare of the whole family, would be executed, and it required the utmost dispatch. At length the oil boiled. She took the kettle, and poured into each jar, from the first to the last, sufficient boiling oil to scald the robbers and deprive them of life, which she effected according to her wishes.

This act, so worthy of the intrepidity of Morgiana, being performed without noise or disturbance to any one, exactly as she had conceived it, she returned to the kitchen with the empty kettle, and shut the door. She put out the large fire she had made up for this purpose, and left only enough to finish boiling the broth for Ali Baba. She then blew out the lamp, and remained perfectly silent, determined not to go to bed until she had observed what would ensue, as much as the obscurity of night would allow her to distinguish, from a window of the kitchen which overlooked the court.

Morgiana had scarcely waited a quarter of an hour when the captain of the robbers awoke. He got up, and opening the window, looked out: all was dark, and a profound silence reigned;

he gave the signal by throwing the pebbles, many of which fell on the jars, as the sound plainly proved. He listened, but heard nothing that could lead him to suppose his men obeyed the summons. He became uneasy at this delay, and threw some pebbles down a second and even a third time. They all struck the jars, yet nothing appeared to indicate that they were heard: he was at a loss to account for the mystery. He descended into the court in the utmost alarm, with as little noise as possible, and approached the first jar. As he was going to ask whether the robber contained in it, and whom he supposed still living, was asleep, he smelt a strong scent of hot and burning oil issuing from the jar, by which he suspected his enterprise against Ali Baba to destroy him, pillage his house, and carry off, if possible, all the money which he had taken from him and the community, had failed. He proceeded to the next jar, and to all in succession, and discovered that all his men had shared the same fate; and, by the diminution of the oil in that which he had brought full, he guessed the means that had been used to deprive him of the assistance he expected. Mortified at having thus missed his aim, he jumped over the garden gate which led out of the court, and, going from one garden to another by getting over the walls, he made his escape.

When Morgiana perceived that all was still and silent, and that the captain of the thieves did not return, she concluded he had decamped

as he did, instead of attempting to escape by the house door, which was fastened with double bolts. Fully satisfied and overjoyed at having so well succeeded in securing the safety of the whole family, she at length retired to bed, and soon fell asleep.

Ali Baba went out before daybreak and, followed by his slave, repaired to the bath, totally ignorant of the surprising event which had taken place in his house during his sleep, for Morgiana had not thought it necessary to wake him, particularly as she had no time to lose while she was engaged in her perilous enterprise, and it was useless to interrupt his repose after she had averted the danger.

When he returned from the bath, the sun being risen, Ali Baba was surprised to see that the jars of oil were still in their places, and that the merchant had not taken them to the market with his mules; he inquired the reason of Morgiana, who let him in, and who had left everything in its original state, in order to show him the deceit which had been practised on him, and to convince him more sensibly of the effort she had made for his preservation.

"My good master," said Morgiana in reply to Ali Baba's question, "may God preserve you and all your family. You will be better informed of what you wish to know when you shall have seen what I am going to show you, if you will take the trouble to come with me." Ali Baba followed Morgiana, and when she had shut the

door, she took him to the first jar, and bade him look in and see whether it contained oil. He did as she desired, and, perceiving a man in the jar, he hastily drew back, and uttered a cry of surprise. "Do not be afraid," said she, "the man you see there will not do you any harm; he has attempted it, but he will never hurt either you or any one else again, for he is now a corpse." "Morgiana," exclaimed Ali Baba, "what does all this mean? Do explain this mystery." "I will explain it," replied Morgiana; "but moderate your astonishment, and do not awaken the curiosity of your neighbours to learn what it is of the utmost importance that you should keep secret and concealed. Look, first, at all the other jars."

Ali Baba examined all the rest of the jars, one after another, from the first till he came to the last, which contained the oil, and he remarked that its contents were considerably diminished. This operation being completed, he remained motionless with astonishment, sometimes casting his eyes on Morgiana, then looking at the jars, yet without speaking a word, so great was his surprise. At length, as if speech were suddenly restored to him, he said, "And what is become of the merchant?"

"The merchant," replied Morgiana, "is just as much a merchant as I am. I can tell you who he is, and what is become of him; but you will hear the whole history more conveniently in your own chamber, for it is now time, for the

sake of your health, that you should take your broth after coming out of the bath." Whilst Ali Baba went into his room, Morgiana returned to the kitchen to get the broth; and, when she brought it, before Ali Baba would take it, he said, "Begin to relate this wonderful history, and satisfy the extreme impatience I feel to know all its circumstances."

Morgiana, in obedience to Ali Baba's request, detailed the events of the preceding night, adding, as she concluded, "I am convinced that this is the conclusion of a scheme of which I observed the beginning two or three days ago, but which I did not think it necessary to trouble you with an account of." She then described the marks made upon the door, and the manner in which she had rendered them useless, adding, "If you connect this with what has happened, you will find that the whole is a machination contrived by the thieves of the forest, whose troop, I know not how, seems to have been diminished by two; but, be that as it may, it is now reduced to three at most. This proves that they are determined on your death, and you will do well to be on your guard against them so long as you are certain that even one remains. On my part, I will do all in my power towards your preservation, which, indeed, I consider my duty."

When Morgiana ceased speaking, Ali Baba, penetrated with gratitude for the great obligation he owed her, replied, "I will recompense you as

you deserve before I die. I owe my life to you, and, to give you an immediate proof of my feelings on the occasion, I from this moment give you your liberty, and will soon reward you in a more ample manner. I am persuaded, as well as yourself, that the forty robbers laid this snare for me. God, through your agency, has delivered me from the danger. I hope He will continue to protect me from their malice, and that, by averting destruction from my head, He will make it recoil with greater certainty on them, and thus deliver the world from so dangerous and cursed a persecution. What we have now to do is to use the utmost dispatch in burying the bodies of this pest of the human race, yet with so much secrecy that no one shall entertain the slightest suspicion of their fate, and for this purpose I will instantly go to work with Abdallah."

Ali Baba's garden was of a considerable length, and terminated by some large trees. He went without delay with his slave, to dig a grave under these trees of sufficient length and breadth to contain the bodies he had to inter. The ground was soft and easy to remove, so they were not long in completing their work. They took the bodies out of the jars, and set apart the arms with which the robbers had furnished themselves. They then carried the bodies to the bottom of the garden, and placed them in the grave, and, after having covered them with the earth they had previously removed,

they spread about what remained, to make the surface of the ground appear even, as it was before. Ali Baba carefully concealed the oil-jars and the arms: and as for the mules, of which he was not then in want, he sent them at different times to the market, where he disposed of them by means of his slave.

Whilst Ali Baba was taking these precautions to prevent its being publicly known by what means he had become rich in so short a space of time, the captain of the forty thieves had returned to the forest, mortified beyond measure at having met with such bad success. On reaching the cavern, the dismal solitude of this gloomy habitation appeared to him insupportable. "Brave companions!" cried he, "partners of my labours and my pains! where are you? What can I accomplish without your assistance? Did I select and assemble you only to see you perish all at one moment by a destiny so fatal and so unworthy of your courage? My regret for your loss would not have been so poignant had you died sabre in hand like valiant men. When shall I be able to collect together another troop of intrepid men like you? and even should I wish it, how could I undertake it without exposing so much treasure in gold and silver to the mercy of him who hath already enriched himself with a part of it? I cannot, I must not think of such an enterprise until I have put an end to his existence. What I have not been able to accomplish with such powerful assistance,

I will perform alone; and, when I shall have secured this immense property from being exposed to pillage, I will then endeavour to provide a master and successors for it after my decease, that it may be not only preserved, but augmented to the latest posterity." Having formed this resolution, he felt no embarrassment as to the execution of it, and, filled with the most pleasing hopes, he fell asleep, and passed the rest of the night very quietly.

The next morning, the captain of the robbers awoke at an early hour, as he had proposed, put on a dress suitable to his design, and repaired to the city, where he took a lodging in a khan. As he supposed that what had happened in the house of Ali Baba might have become generally known, he asked the host whether there were any news stirring; in reply to which, the host talked on a variety of subjects, but none relating to what he wished to be informed of. By this he concluded that the reason why Ali Baba kept the transaction so profoundly secret was that he did not wish it to be divulged that he had access to so immense a treasure, and also that he was apprehensive of his life's being in danger on this account. This idea excited him to neglect nothing that could hasten his destruction, which he intended to accomplish by means as secret as that which Ali Baba had adopted toward the robbers.

The captain provided himself with a horse, which he made use of to convey to his lodging

several kinds of rich stuffs and fine linens, bringing them from the forest at various times, with all the necessary precautions for keeping the place from whence he brought them still concealed. In order to dispose of this merchandise, when he had collected together as much as he thought proper, he sought for a shop. Having found one that would suit him, he hired it of the proprietor, furnished it with goods, and established himself in it. The shop that was exactly opposite to his was that which had belonged to Cassim, and was now occupied by the son of Ali Baba.

The captain of the robbers, who had assumed the name of Cogia Houssain, did not fail in the proper civilities to the neighbouring merchants, which for newcomers was the usual custom. But the son of Ali Baba, being young and of a pleasing address, and the captain having more frequent occasion to converse with him than with the others, he very soon formed an intimacy with him. This acquaintance he soon resolved to cultivate with greater assiduity and care, when, three or four days after he was settled in his shop, he recognised Ali Baba, who came to see his son, as he was in the constant habit of doing; and, on inquiring of the son after his departure, discovered that he was his father. He now increased his attentions and caresses to him; he made him several little presents, and also often invited him to his table, where he regaled him very handsomely.

The son of Ali Baba did not desire so many compliments from Cogia Houssain without returning them. But his lodging was small, and he had no conveniences for entertaining him as he wished. He mentioned his intention to his father, adding that it was not proper that he should delay any longer to return the favours he had received from Cogia Houssain.

Ali Baba very willingly took the charge of the entertainment. "My son," said he, "to-morrow is Friday, and, as it is a day on which the most considerable merchants, such as Cogia Houssain and yourself, keep their shops shut, invite him to take a walk with you after dinner, and, as you return, direct your course so that you may pass my house, and then beg him to come in. It will be better to manage thus than to invite him in a formal way. I will give orders to Morgiana to prepare a supper, and have it ready by the time you come."

On the Friday, Cogia Houssain and the son of Ali Baba met in the afternoon to take their walk together, as had been agreed. On their return, the son of Ali Baba, as if by accident, led Cogia Houssain through the street in which his father lived, and, when they had reached the house, he stopped him, and knocked at the door. "This," said he, "is my father's house; he has desired me to procure him the honour of your acquaintance, after what I told him of your friendship for me. I entreat you to add this favour to the many I have received from you."

Although Cogia Houssain had now reached the object of his desires, which was to gain admission into the house of Ali Baba, and to attempt his life without hazarding his own or creating any suspicion, yet he now endeavoured to excuse himself, and pretended to take leave of the son; but as the slave of Ali Baba opened the door at that moment, the son, in an obliging manner, took him by the hand, and going in first, drew him forward, and, as it were, forced him to comply, though seemingly against his wishes.

Ali Baba received Cogia Houssain in a friendly manner, and gave him as hearty a welcome as he could desire. He thanked him for his kindness to his son. "The obligation he is under to you," added he, "as well as am I myself, is so much the more considerable, as he is a young man who has not yet been much in the world, and you have had the goodness to condescend to form his manners."

Cogia Houssain did not spare his compliments in return for Ali Baba's, assuring him that, although his son had not acquired the experience of older men, yet he was possessed of an amount of good sense which was of more service to him than experience was to many others.

After a short conversation on topics of an indifferent nature, Cogia Houssain was going to take his leave, but Ali Baba stopped him. "Where are you going, sir?" said he; "I entreat you to do me the honour of staying to sup with

me. The humble meal you will partake of is little worthy of the honour you will confer on it; but, such as it is, I hope you will accept the intention with as much good-will as I offer it."

"Sir," replied Cogia Houssain, "I am fully persuaded of your kindness; and, although I beg you to excuse me if I take my leave without accepting your obliging invitation, yet I entreat you to believe that I refuse you, not from incivility or contempt, but because I have a very strong reason, and which I am sure you would approve, were it known to you."

"What might this reason be, sir," resumed Ali Baba, "might I take the liberty of asking you?" "I do not refuse to tell it," said Cogia Houssain. "It is this: I never eat of any dish that has salt in it. Judge, then, of the figure I should cut at your table." "If this be your only reason," replied Ali Baba, "it need not deprive me of the honour of your company at supper, unless you have absolutely determined otherwise. In the first place, the bread which is eaten in my house does not contain any salt; and, as for the meat and other dishes, I promise you there shall be none in those which are served before you. I will now go to give orders to that effect; you will, therefore, do me the favour to remain, and I will be with you in an instant."

Ali Baba went into the kitchen, and desired Morgiana not to put any salt to the meat she was going to serve for supper, and also to prepare,

without any salt, two or three dishes of those that he had ordered.

Morgiana, who was just going to serve the supper, could not avoid expressing some discontent at this new order, and making some inquiries of Ali Baba. "Who," said she, "is this capricious man, that cannot eat salt? Your supper will be good for nothing if I delay it any later." "Do not be angry," replied Ali Baba: "he is a good man; do what I desire you."

Morgiana obeyed, though much against her will; and she felt some curiosity to see this man who did not eat salt. When she had finished, and Abdallah had prepared the table, she assisted him in carrying the dishes. On looking at Cogia Houssain, she instantly recognised him to be the captain of the robbers, notwithstanding his disguise; and, examining him with great attention, she perceived that he had a dagger concealed under his dress. "I am no longer surprised," said she to herself, "that this villain will not eat salt with my master; he is his bitterest enemy, and means to murder him; but I will still prevent him from accomplishing his purpose."

When Morgiana had finished serving the dishes and assisting Abdallah, she availed herself of the time while they were at supper, and made the necessary preparations for the execution of an enterprise of the boldest and most intrepid nature; and she had just completed them when Abdallah came to inform her that it was time to

serve the fruit. She carried it in; and, when Abdallah had taken away the supper, she placed it on the table. She then put a small table near Ali Baba, with the wine and three cups, and left the room with Abdallah, as if to go to supper together, and to leave Ali Baba, according to custom, at liberty to converse and entertain himself with his guest and to push the wine about.

Cogia Houssain, or rather the captain of the forty thieves, now thought that a favourable opportunity for revenging himself on Ali Baba, by taking his life, was arrived. "I will make them both intoxicated," thought he, "and then the son, against whom I bear no malice, will not prevent my plunging my dagger into the heart of his father, and I shall escape by way of the garden, as I did before, while the cook and the slave are at their supper, or perhaps asleep in the kitchen."

Instead, however, of going to supper, Morgiana, who had penetrated into the views of the pretended Cogia Houssain, did not allow him time to put his wicked intentions into execution. She dressed herself like a dancer, put on a headdress suitable to that character, and wore round her waist a girdle of silver gilt, to which she fastened a dagger made of the same metal. Her face was covered with a very handsome mask. When she had thus disguised herself, she said to Abdallah, "Take your tabor, and let us go and entertain our master's guest, who

is the friend of his son, as we do sometimes with our performances."

Abdallah took his tabor, and began to play as he walked before Morgiana, and entered the room. Morgiana following him, made a low courtesy with a deliberate air to attract notice, as if to request permission to do what she could to amuse the company. Abdallah perceiving that Ali Baba was going to speak, ceased striking his tabor. "Come in, Morgiana," cried Ali Baba; "Cogia Houssain will judge of your skill, and tell us his opinion. Do not, however, suppose, sir," continued he, addressing Cogia Houssain, "that I have been at any expense to procure you this entertainment. We have composed it all ourselves, and it is only my slave and my cook and housekeeper whom you see. I hope you will find it amusing."

Cogia Houssain did not expect Ali Baba to add this entertainment to the supper he had given him. This made him apprehensive that he should not be able to avail himself of the opportunity he thought now presented itself. But, should that be the case, he still consoled himself with the hopes of meeting with another, if he continued the acquaintance with Ali Baba and his son. Therefore, although he would gladly have dispensed with this addition to the entertainment, he nevertheless pretended to be obliged to him, and added that whatever gave Ali Baba pleasure could not fail of being agreeable to him.

When Abdallah perceived that Ali Baba and Cogia Houssain had ceased speaking, he again began to play on his tabor, singing to it an air for Morgiana to dance to; she, who was equal to any of those who practised dancing for their profession, performed her part so admirably that every spectator who had seen her must have been delighted, independently of the present company, of which, perhaps, Cogia Houssain was the least attentive to her excellence.

After having performed several dances with equal grace and agility, she at length drew out the dagger, and, dancing with it in her hand, she surpassed all she had yet done by her light movements and high leaps, and by the wonderful efforts which she interspersed in the figure—sometimes presenting the dagger as if to strike, and, at others, holding it to her own bosom, pretending to stab herself.

At length, as if out of breath, she took the tabor from Abdallah with her left hand, and holding the dagger in her right, she presented the tabor with the hollow part upwards to Ali Baba, in imitation of the dancers by profession, who make use of this practice to invite the liberality of the spectators.

Ali Baba threw a piece of gold into the tabor. Morgiana then presented it to his son, who followed his father's example. Cogia Houssain, who saw that she was advancing toward him for the same purpose, had already taken his purse from his bosom to contribute his present,

and was putting his hand in it, when Morgiana, with a courage and fortitude equal to the resolution she had taken, plunged the dagger into his heart so deep that the life-blood streamed from the wound when she withdrew it.

Ali Baba and his son, terrified at this action, uttered a loud cry. "Wretch!" exclaimed Ali Baba, "what hast thou done? Thou hast ruined me and my family for ever!"

"What I have done," replied Morgiana, "is not for your ruin, but for your salvation." Then opening Cogia Houssain's robe to show Ali Baba the poniard which was concealed under it, "See," continued she, "the cruel enemy you had to deal with; examine his countenance attentively, and you will recognise the pretended oil merchant and the captain of the forty robbers. Do you not recollect that he refused to eat salt with you? Can you require a stronger proof of his malicious intentions? Before I even saw him, from the moment you told me of this peculiarity in your guest, I suspected his design, and you are now convinced that my suspicions were not ill-founded."

Ali Baba, who was now aware of the fresh obligation he owed to Morgiana for having thus preserved his life a second time, embraced her, and said: "Morgiana, I gave you your liberty, and, at the same time, promised to give you stronger proofs of my gratitude at some future period. This period is now arrived, and I present you to my son as his wife." Then

addressing his son: "I believe you," said he, "to be so dutiful a son that you will not take it amiss if I should bestow Morgiana upon you without previously consulting your inclinations. Your obligation to her is not less than mine. You plainly see that Cogia Houssain only sought your acquaintance in order to insure success in his diabolical treachery; and, had he sacrificed me to his vengeance, you cannot suppose that you would have been spared. You must further consider that, in marrying Morgiana, you connect yourself with the preserver of my family, and the support of yours to the end of your days."

His son, far from showing any symptoms of discontent, said that he willingly consented to the marriage, not only because he was desirous of proving his ready obedience to his father's wishes, but also because his inclinations strongly urged him to the union. They then began to prepare for the interment of the captain of the robbers by the side of his former companions; and this was performed with such secrecy, that the circumstance was not known till the expiration of many years, when no one was any longer interested in keeping this memorable history concealed.

A few days after, Ali Baba had the nuptials of his son and Morgiana celebrated with great solemnity, and he had the satisfaction of observing that the friends and neighbours he had invited, who did not know the true reason of

the marriage, but were not unacquainted with the good qualities of Morgiana, admired his generosity and discrimination.

After the marriage was solemnised, Ali Baba, who had not revisited the cave since he had brought away the body of his brother Cassim on one of the three asses, together with the gold with which the other two were laden, lest he should meet with any of the thieves and be surprised by them, still refrained from going, even after the death of the thirty-seven robbers and their captain, as he was ignorant of the fate of the other two, and supposed them to be still alive.

At the expiration of a year, however, finding that no scheme had been attempted to disturb his quiet, he had the curiosity to make a journey to the cave, taking the necessary precaution for his safety. He mounted his horse, and, when he had nearly reached the cave, seeing no traces of either men or horses, he conceived it to be a favourable omen; he dismounted, and repeated the words, "*Open Sesame*," which he had not forgotten. The door opened, and he entered. The state in which everything appeared in the cave led him to judge that no one had been in it from the time that the pretended Cogia Houssain had opened his shop in the city, and he therefore concluded that the whole troop of robbers was exterminated, and that he was the only person in the whole world who was acquainted with the secret for entering the cave,

and, consequently, that the immense treasure it contained was entirely at his disposal. He had provided himself with a large wallet, and he filled it with as much gold as his horse could carry, after which he returned to the city.

From that time, Ali Baba and his son, whom he took to the cave and taught the secret to enter it, and after them their posterity, who were also entrusted with the important secret, enjoying their riches with moderation, lived in great splendour, and were honoured with the most dignified situations in the city.

THE GRIDIRON

BY

SAMUEL LOVER

A CERTAIN old gentleman in the west of Ireland, whose love of the ridiculous quite equalled his taste for claret and fox-hunting, was wont, upon certain festive occasions when opportunity offered, to amuse his friends by "drawing out" one of his servants who was exceedingly fond of what he termed his "thravels," and in whom a good deal of whim, some queer stories, and, perhaps more than all, long and faithful service, had established a right of loquacity. He was one of those few trusty and privileged domestics who, if his master unheedingly uttered a rash thing in a fit of passion, would venture to set him right. If the squire said, "I'll turn that rascal off," my friend Pat would say, "Troth you won't, sir; and Pat was always right, for if any altercation arose upon the subject-matter in hand, he was sure to throw in some good reason, either from former service—general good conduct—or the delinquent's "wife and childher"—that always turned the scale.

But I am digressing; on such merry meetings as I have alluded to, the master, after making certain "approaches," as a military man would

say, as the preparatory steps in laying siege to some extravagance of his servant, might perchance assail Pat thus: "By-the-by, Sir John" (addressing a distinguished guest), "Pat has a very curious story, which something you told me to-day reminds me of. You remember, Pat" (turning to the man, evidently pleased at the notice paid to himself)—"you remember that queer adventure you had in France?"

"Throth I do, sir," grins forth Pat.

"What!" exclaims Sir John, in feigned surprise, "was Pat ever in France?"

"Indeed he was," cries mine host; and Pat adds, "Ay, and farther, plaze your honour."

"I assure you, Sir John," continues my host, "Pat told me a story once that surprised me very much, respecting the ignorance of the French."

"Indeed!" rejoins the baronet; "really, I always supposed the French to be a most accomplished people."

"Throth then, they are not, sir," interrupts Pat.

"Oh, by no means," adds mine host, shaking his head empathically.

"I believe, Pat, 'twas when you were crossing the Atlantic?" says the master, turning to Pat with a seductive air, and leading into the "full and true account" (for Pat had thought fit to visit "North Amerikay," for a "raison he had" in the autumn of the year '98).

"Yes, sir," says Pat, "the broad Atlantic"—a favourite phrase of his, which he gave with a brogue as broad almost as the Atlantic itself.

"It was the time I was lost in crassin' the broad Atlantic, comin' home," began Pat, decoyed into the recital; "whin the winds began to blow, and the sae to rowl, that you'd think the *Colleen dhas* (that was her name) would not have a mast left but what would rowl out of her.

"Well, sure enough, the masts went by the board at last, and the pumps was choak'd (divil choak them for that same), and av coorse the weather gained an us, and throth, to be filled with wather is neither good for man or baste; and she was sinkin' fast, settlin' down, as the sailors calls it, and faith I never was good at settlin' down in my life, and I liked it then less nor ever; accordingly we prepared for the worst, and put out the boat, and got a sack of bishkits, and a cashk o' pork, and a kag o' wather, and a thrifle o' rum aboord, and any other little matthers we could think iv in the mortial hurry we wor in—and, faith, there was no time to be lost, for my darlint, the *Colleen dhas*, went down like a lump o' lead, afore we wor many sthrokes o' the oar away from her.

"Well, we dhrifted away all that night, and next mornin' we put up a blanket an the ind av a pole as well as we could, and thin we sailed illigant, for we darn't show a stitch o' canvas the night before, bekase it was blowin' like murther, savin' your presence, and sure it's the wondher

of the world we worn't swally'd alive by the ragin' sae.

"Well, away we wint for more nor a week, and nothin' before our two good-lookin' eyes but the canophy iv heaven, and the wide ocean—the broad Atlantic—not a thing was to be seen but the sae and the sky; and though the sae and the sky is mighty purty things in themselves, throth they're no great things whin you've nothin' else to look at for a week together—and the barest rock in the world, so it was land, would be more welkim. And then, sure enough, throth, our provisions began to run low, the bishkits, and the wather, and the rum—throth *that* was gone first of all, God help uz—and oh! it was thin that starvation began to stare us in the face—'Oh, murther, murther, captain, darling!' says I, 'I wish we could see land anywhere,' says I.

"'More power to your elbow, Paddy, my boy,' says he, 'for sich a good wish, and throth, it's myself wishes the same.'

"'Oh,' says I, 'that it may plaze you, sweet queen in heaven, supposin' it was only a dissolute island,' says I, 'inhabited with Turks, sure they wouldn't be such bad Christians as to refuse uz a bit and a sup.'

"'Whisht, whisht, Paddy!' says the captain, 'don't be talkin' bad of any one,' says he; 'you don't know how soon you may want a good word put in for yourself, if you should be called to quarthers in th' other world all of a suddent,' says he.

"'Thrue for you, captain, darlint,' says I—I called him Darlint, and made free wid him, you see, bekase disthress makes uz all equal—'thrue for you, captain, jewel—God betune us and harm, I owe no man any spite'—and throth, that was only truth. Well, the last bishkit was sarved out, and by gor the wather itself was all gone at last, and we passed the night mighty cowld. Well, at the brake o' day the sun riz most beautiful out o' the waves, that was as bright as silver and as clear as cryshthal. But it was only the more crule upon uz, for we wor beginnin' to feel terrible hungry; when all at wanst I thought I spied the land—by gor, I thought I felt my heart up in my throat in a minnit, and 'Thundher and turf, captain,' says I, 'look to leeward,' says I.

"'What for?' says he.

"'I think I see the land,' says I. So he ups with his bring-'um-near (that's what the sailors call a spy-glass, sir) and looks out, and, sure enough, it was.

"'Hurra!' says he, 'we're all right now; pull away, my boys,' says he.

"'Take care you're not mistaken,' says I; 'maybe it's only a fog-bank, captain, darlint,' says I.

"'Oh, no,' says he; 'it's the land in airnest.'

"'Oh, then, whereabouts in the wide world are we, captain?' says I; 'maybe it id be in Roosia or Proosia, or the German Oceant,' says I.

"'Tut, you fool,' says he—for he had that con-

saited way wid him, thinkin' himself cleverer nor any one else—'that's France,' says he.

"'Hare an ouns,' says I, 'do you tell me so? and how do you know it's France it is, captain dear?' says I.

"'Bekase this is the Bay o' Bishky we're in now,' says he.

"'Throth, I was thinkin' so myself,' says I, 'by the rowl it has; for I often heerd av it in regard o' that same;' and throth, the likes av it I never seen before nor since, and, with the help o' God, never will.

"Well, with that my heart began to grow light, and when I seen my life was safe, I began to grow twice hungrier nor ever—so says I, 'Captain, jewel, I wish we had a gridiron.'

"'Why then,' says he, 'thunder and turf,' says he, 'what puts a gridiron into your head?'

"'Bekase I'm starvin' with the hunger,' says I.

"'And sure, bad luck to you,' says he, 'you couldn't ate a gridiron,' says he, 'barrin' you wor a pelican o' the wildherness,' says he.

"'Ate a gridiron!' says I; 'och, in throth, I'm not such a gommoch all out as that, anyhow. But sure if we had a gridiron we could dress a beefsteak,' says I.

"'Arrah! but where's the beefsteak?' says he.

"'Sure, couldn't we cut a slice aff the pork?' says I.

"'By gor, I never thought o' that,' says the captain. 'You're a clever fellow, Paddy,' says he, laughin'.

"'Oh, there's many a thrue word said in a joke,' says I.

"'Thrue for you, Paddy,' says he.

"'Well, thin,' says I, 'if you put me ashore there beyant' (for we were nearin' the land all the time), 'and sure I can ask thim for to lind me the loan of a gridiron,' says I.

"'Oh, by gor, the butther's comin' out o' the stirabout in airnest now,' says he; 'you gommoch,' says he, 'sure I towld you before that's France—and sure they're all furriners there,' says the captain.

"'Well,' says I, 'and how do you know but I'm as good a furriner myself as any o' thim?'

"'What do you mane?' says he.

"'I mane,' says I, 'what I told you, that I'm as good a furriner myself as any o' thim.'

"'Make me sinsible,' says he.

"'Bedad, maybe that's more nor me, or greater nor me, could do,' says I—and we all began to laugh at him, for I thought I'd pay him aff for his bit o' consait about the German Oceant.

"'Lave off your humbuggin',' says he, 'I bid you, and tell me what it is you mane at all at all.'

"'*Parley voo frongsay*,' says I.

"'Oh, your humble servant,' says he. 'Why, by gor, you're a scholar, Paddy.'

"'Throth, you may say that,' says I.

"'Why, you're a clever fellow, Paddy,' says the captain, jeerin'-like.

"'You're not the first that said that,' says I, 'whether you joke or no.'

"'Oh, but I'm in airnest,' says the captain—'and do you tell me, Paddy,' says he, 'that you spake Frinch?'

"'*Parley voo frongsay*,' says I.

"'By gor, that bangs Banagher. I never met the likes o' you, Paddy,' says he. 'Pull away, boys, and put Paddy ashore.'

"So with that, it was no sooner said nor done—they pulled away and got close into shore in less than no time, and run the boat up in a little creek; and a beautiful creek it was, with a lovely white sthrand, an illigant place for ladies to bathe in the summer—and out I got; and it's stiff enough in my limbs I was afther bein' cramped up in the boat, and perished with the cowld and hunger; but I conthrived to scramble on, one way or the other, tow'rd a little bit iv a wood that was close to the shore, and the smoke curlin' out of it, quite timptin'-like.

"'By the powdhers o' war, I'm all right,' says I; 'there's a house there'—and sure enough there was, and a parcel of men, women and childher, ating their dinner round a table quite convenient. And so I wint up to the dure, and I thought I'd be very civil to thim—as I heerd the Frinch was always mighty p'lite intirely—and I thought I'd show them I knew what good manners was.

"So I took off my hat, and making a low bow, says I, 'God save all here,' says I.

"Well, to be sure, they all stopt ating at wanst, and begun to stare at me, and faith they almost

looked me out of countenance—and I thought to myself it was not good manners at all—more be token from furriners, which they call so mighty p'lite; but I never minded that, in regard of wantin' the gridiron; 'and so,' says I, 'I beg your pardon,' says I, 'for the liberty I take, but it's only bein' in disthress in regard of ating,' says I, 'that I make bowld to throuble yez, and if you could lind me the loan of a gridiron,' says I, 'I'd be intirely obleeged to ye.'

"By gor, they all stared at me twice worse nor before, and with that, says I (knowing what was in their minds), 'Indeed it's thrue for you,' says I; 'I'm tatthered to pieces, and God knows I look quare enough, but it's by raison of the storm,' says I, 'which dhruv us ashore here below, and we're all starvin',' says I.

"So thin they began to look at each other agin, and myself, seeing at wanst dirty thoughts was in their heads, and that they tuk me for a poor beggar comin' to crave charity—with that, says I, 'Oh! not at all,' says I, 'by no manes; we have plenty o' mate ourselves, there below, and we'll dhress it,' says I, 'if you would be plazed to lind us the loan of a gridiron,' says I, makin' a low bow.

"Well, sir, with that throth they stared at me twice worse nor ever, and faith I began to think that maybe the captain was wrong, and that it was not France at all at all—and so says I, 'I beg pardon, sir,' says I, to a fine old man, with a head of hair as white as silver—'maybe I'm

undher a mistake,' says I, 'but I thought I was in France, sir; aren't you furriners?' says I—'*Parley voo frongsay?*'

"'We, munseer,' says he.

"'Then would you lind me the loan of a gridiron,' says I, 'if you plaze?'

"Oh, it was thin that they stared at me as if I had siven heads; and faith myself began to feel flusthered like, and onaisy—and so says I, making a bow and scrape agin, 'I know it's a liberty I take, sir,' says I, 'but it's only in the regard of bein' cast away, and if you plaze, sir,' says I, '*Parley voo frongsay?*'

"'We, munseer,' says he, mighty sharp.

"'Then would you lind me the loan of a gridiron?' says I, 'and you'll obleege me.'

"Well, sir, the ould chap begun to munseer me, but the divil a bit of a gridiron he'd gie me, and so I began to think they were all neygars, for all their fine manners; and throth my blood began to rise, and says I, 'By my sowl, if it was you was in disthress,' says I, 'and if it was to ould Ireland you kem, it's not only the gridiron they'd give you if you ax'd it, but something to put an it too, and a dhrop of dhrink into the bargain, and *cead mile failte*.'

"Well, the word *cead mille failte* seemed to sthreck his heart, and the ould chap cocked his ear, and so I thought I'd give him another offer, and make him sinsible at last; and so says I, wanst more, quite slow, that he might undherstand—'*Parley—voo—frongsay?* munseer.'

"'We, munseer,' says he.

"'Then lind me the loan of a gridiron,' says I, 'and bad scran to you.'

"Well, bad win' to the bit of it he'd gi' me, and the ould chap begins bowin' and scrapin', and said something or other about a long tongs.

"'Phoo! the divil sweep yourself and your tongs,' says I, 'I don't want a tongs at all at all; but can't you listen to raison?' says I—'*Parley voo frongsay?*'

"'We, munseer.'

"'Then lend me the loan of a gridiron,' says I, 'and howld your prate.'

"Well, what would you think but he shook his owld noddle, as much as to say he wouldn't; and so says I, 'Bad cess to the likes o' that I ever seen—throth if you were in my country, it's not that-a-way they'd use you; the curse o' the crows on you, you owld sinner,' says I, 'the divil a longer I'll darken your dure.'

"So he seen I was vex'd, and I thought as I was turnin' away, I see him begin to relint, and that his conscience throubled him; and says I, turnin' back, 'Well, I'll give you one chance more—you owld thief—are you a'Chrishthan at all at all? are you a furriner,' says I, 'that all the world calls so p'lite? Bad luck to you, do you undherstand your own language?—*Parley voo frongsay?*' says I.

"'We, munseer,' says he.

"'Then, thundher and turf,' says I, 'will you lind me the loan of a gridiron?'

"Well, sir, the divil resave the bit of it he'd gi' me—and so with that, 'the curse o' the hungry on you, you owld negardly villain,' says I; 'the back o' my hand and the sowl o' my foot to you; that you may want a gridiron yourself yet,' says I; 'and wherever I go, high and low, rich and poor, shall hear o' you,' says I; and with that I lift them there, sir, and kem away—and in throth it's often since that *I thought that it was remarkable.*"

THE CREMONA VIOLIN

BY

ERNST THEODOR WOLFGANG HOFFMANN

COUNCILLOR KRESPEL was one of the strangest, oddest men I ever met with in my life. When I went to live in H——, for a time the whole town was full of talk about him, as he happened to be just then in the midst of one of the very craziest of his schemes. Krespel had the reputation of being both a clever learned lawyer and a skilful diplomatist. One of the reigning princes of Germany—not, however, one of the most powerful—had appealed to him for assistance in drawing up a memorial, which he was desirous of presenting at the Imperial Court with the view of furthering his legitimate claims upon a certain strip of territory. The project was crowned with the happiest success; and as Krespel had once complained that he could never find a dwelling sufficiently comfortable to suit him, the prince, to reward him for the memorial, undertook to defray the cost of building a house which Krespel might erect just as he pleased. Moreover, the prince was willing to purchase any site that he should fancy. This offer, however, the Councillor would not accept; he insisted that the house should he built in his garden, situated

in a very beautiful neighbourhood outside the town-walls. So he bought all kinds of materials, and had them carted out. Then he might have been seen day after day, attired in his curious garments (which he himself caused to be made according to certain fixed rules of his own), slaking the lime, riddling the sand, packing up the bricks and stones in regular heaps, and so on. All this he did without once consulting an architect or thinking about a plan. One fine day, however, he went to an experienced builder of the town, and requested him to be in his garden at daybreak the next morning, with all his journeymen and apprentices, and a large body of labourers, etc., to build him his house. Naturally, the builder asked for the architect's plan, and was not a little astonished when Krespel replied that none was needed, and that things would turn out all right in the end, just as he wanted them. Next morning, when the builder and his men came to the place, they found a trench drawn out in the shape of an exact square; and Krespel said, "Here's where you must lay the foundation; then carry up the walls until I say they are high enough." "Without windows and doors, and without partition-walls?" broke in the builder, as if alarmed at Krespel's mad folly. "Do what I tell you, my dear sir," replied the Councillor quite calmly; "leave the rest to me; it will be all right." It was only the promise of high pay that could induce the builder to proceed with

the ridiculous building; but none has ever been erected under merrier circumstances. As there was an abundant supply of food and drink, the workmen never left their work; and, amidst their continuous laughter, the four walls were run up with incredible quickness, until one day Krespel cried, "Stop!" Then the workmen, laying down trowel and hammer, came down from the scaffoldings, and gathered round Krespel in a circle, whilst every laughing face was asking, "Well, and what now?" "Make way!" cried Krespel; and then running to one end of the garden, he strode slowly toward the square of brickwork. When he came close to the wall, he shook his head in a dissatisfied manner, ran to the other end of the garden, again strode slowly toward the brickwork square, and proceeded to act as before. These tactics he pursued several times, until, at length, running his sharp nose hard against the wall, he cried, "Come here, come here, men! break me a door in here! Here's where I want a door made!" He gave the exact dimensions in feet and inches, and they did as he bid them. Then he stepped inside the structure, and smiled with satisfaction as the builder remarked that the walls were just the height of a good two-storied house. Krespel walked thoughtfully backwards and forwards across the space within, the bricklayers behind him with hammers and picks, and wherever he cried, "Make a window here, six feet high by four feet broad!" "There a little

window, three feet by two!" a hole was made in a trice.

It was at this stage of the proceedings that I came to H——; and it was highly amusing to see how hundreds of people stood round about the garden, and raised a loud shout whenever the stones flew out and a new window appeared where nobody had for a moment expected it. And, in the same manner, Krespel proceeded with the buildings and fittings of the rest of the house, and with all the work necessary to that end; everything had to be done on the spot in accordance with the instructions which the Councillor gave from time to time. However, the absurdity of the whole business, the growing conviction that things would, in the end, turn out better than might have been expected, but, above all, Krespel's generosity—which indeed cost him nothing—kept them all in good-humour. Thus were overcome the difficulties which necessarily arose out of this eccentric way of building, and in a short time there was a completely finished house, its outside, indeed, presenting a most extraordinary appearance, no two windows, etc., being alike, but, on the other hand, the interior arrangements suggested a peculiar feeling of comfort. All who entered the house bore witness to the truth of this; and I, too, experienced it myself when I was taken in by Krespel after I had become more intimate with him. For hitherto I had not exchanged a word with this eccentric man; his building had

occupied him so much that he had not even once been to Professor M——'s to dinner, as he was in the habit of doing on Tuesdays. Indeed, in reply to a special invitation, he sent word that he should not set foot over the threshold before the house-warming of his new building took place. All his friends and acquaintances, therefore, confidently looked forward to a great banquet; but Krespel invited nobody except the masters, journeymen, apprentices, and labourers who had built the house. He entertained them with the choicest viands; bricklayers' apprentices devoured partridge pies, regardless of consequences; young joiners polished off roast pheasants with the greatest success; whilst hungry labourers helped themselves for once to the choicest morsels of *truffes fricassées*. In the evening, their wives and daughters came, and there was a great ball. After waltzing a short while with the wives of the masters, Krespel sat down among the town musicians, took a violin in his hand, and directed the orchestra until daylight.

On the Tuesday after this festival, which exhibited Councillor Krespel in the character of a friend of the people, I at length saw him appear, to my no little joy, at Professor M——'s. Anything more strange and fantastic than Krespel's behaviour it would be impossible to find. He was so stiff and awkward in his movements that he looked every moment as if he would run up against something or do some damage. But he

did not; and the lady of the house seemed to be well aware that he would not, for she did not grow a shade paler when he rushed with heavy steps round a table crowded with beautiful cups, or when he manœuvred near a large mirror that reached down to the floor, or even when he seized a flower-pot of beautifully painted porcelain, and swung it round in the air as if desirous of making its colours play. Moreover, before dinner, he subjected everything in the Professor's room to a most minute examination; he also took down a picture from the wall, and hung it up again, standing on the cushioned chair to do so. At the same time, he talked a good deal and vehemently; at one time, his thoughts kept leaping, as it were, from one subject to another (this was most conspicuous during dinner); at another, he was unable to have done with an idea: seizing upon it again and again, he gave it all sorts of wonderful twists and turns, and couldn't get back into the ordinary track until something else took hold of his fancy. Sometimes his voice was rough and harsh and screeching, and sometimes it was low and drawling and singing; but at no time did it harmonise with what he was talking about. Music was the subject of conversation; the praises of a new composer were being sung, when Krespel, smiling, said in his low, singing tones, "I wish the devil with his pitchfork would hurl that atrocious garbler of music millions of fathoms down to the bottomless pit of hell!" Then he burst out passionately

and wildly, "She is an angel of heaven, nothing but pure, God-given music!—the paragon and queen of song!"—and tears stood in his eyes. To understand this, we had to go back to a celebrated *artiste*, who had been the subject of conversation an hour before.

Just at this time, a roast hare was on the table; I noticed that Krespel carefully removed every particle of meat from the bones on his plate, and was most particular in his inquiries after the hare's feet; these the Professor's little five-year-old daughter now brought to him with a very pretty smile. Besides, the children had cast many friendly glances towards Krespel during dinner; now they rose and drew nearer to him, but not without signs of timorous awe. What's the meaning of that? thought I to myself. Dessert was brought in; then the Councillor took a little box from his pocket, in which he had a miniature lathe of steel. This he immediately screwed fast to the table, and turning the bones with incredible skill and rapidity, he made all sorts of little fancy boxes and balls, which the children received with cries of delight. Just as we were rising from table, the Professor's niece asked, "And what is our Antonia doing?" Krespel's face was like that of one who has bitten of a sour orange and wants to look as if it were a sweet one; but this expression soon changed into the likeness of a hideous mask, whilst he laughed behind it with downright, bitter, fierce, and, as it seemed to me, satanic

scorn. "Our Antonia? our dear Antonia?" he asked in his drawling, disagreeable singing way. The Professor hastened to intervene; in the reproving glance which he gave his niece, I read that she had touched a point likely to stir up unpleasant memories in Krespel's heart. "How are you getting on with your violins?" interposed the Professor in a jovial manner, taking the Councillor by both hands. Then Krespel's countenance cleared up, and, with a firm voice, he replied: "Capitally, Professor; you recollect my telling you of the lucky chance which threw that splendid Amati into my hands. Well, I've cut it open only to-day—not before to-day. I hope Antonia has carefully taken the rest of it to pieces." "Antonia is a good child," remarked the Professor. "Yes, indeed, that she is," cried the Councillor, whisking himself round; then, seizing his hat and stick, he hastily rushed out of the room. I saw in the mirror how that tears were standing in his eyes.

As soon as the Councillor was gone, I at once urged the Professor to explain to me what Krespel had to do with violins, and particularly with Antonia. "Well," replied the Professor, "not only is the Councillor a remarkably eccentric fellow altogether, but he practises violin-making in his own crack-brained way." "Violin-making!" I exclaimed, perfectly astonished. "Yes," continued the Professor, "according to the judgment of men who understand the thing, Krespel makes the very best violins that

can be found nowadays; formerly, he would frequently let other people play on those in which he had been especially successful, but that's been all over and done with now for a long time. As soon as he has finished a violin, he plays on it himself for one or two hours, with very remarkable power and with the most exquisite expression; then he hangs it up beside the rest, and never touches it again or suffers anybody else to touch it. If a violin by any of the eminent old masters is hunted up anywhere, the Councillor buys it immediately, no matter what the price put upon it. But he plays it as he does his own violins—only once; then he takes it to pieces in order to examine closely its inner structure, and should he fancy he hasn't found exactly what he sought for, he, in a pet, throws the pieces into a big chest, which is already full of the remains of broken violins." "But who and what is Antonia?" I inquired hastily and impetuously. "Well, now, that," continued the Professor—"that is a thing which might very well make me conceive an unconquerable aversion to the Councillor, were I not convinced that there is some peculiar secret behind it, for he is such a good-natured fellow at bottom as to be sometimes guilty of weakness. When we came to H—— several years ago, he led the life of an anchorite, along with an old housekeeper, in —— Street. Soon, by his oddities, he excited the curiosity of his neighbours; and as soon as he became aware of this,

he sought and made acquaintances. Not only in my house, but everywhere, we became so accustomed to him that he grew to be indispensable. In spite of his rude exterior, even the children liked him, without ever proving a nuisance to him; for, notwithstanding all their friendly passages together, they always retained a certain timorous awe of him, which secured him against all over-familiarity. You have to-day had an example of the way in which he wins their hearts by his ready skill in various things. We all at first took him for a crusty old bachelor, and he never contradicted us. After he had been living here some time, he went away, nobody knew where, and returned at the end of some months. The evening following his return his windows were lit up to an unusual extent! This alone was sufficient to arouse his neighbours' attention, and they soon heard the surpassingly beautiful voice of a woman singing to the accompaniment of a piano. Then the music of a violin was heard chiming in and entering upon a keen, ardent contest with the voice. They knew at once that the player was the Councillor. I myself mixed in the large crowd that had gathered in front of his house to listen to this extraordinary concert; and I must confess that, besides this voice and the peculiar, deep, soul-stirring impression which the execution made upon me, the singing of the most celebrated *artistes* whom I had ever heard seemed to me feeble and void of expression. Until then, I

had had no conception of such long-sustained notes, of such nightingale thrills, of such undulations of musical sound, of such swelling up to the strength of organ-notes, of such dying away to the faintest whisper. There was not one whom the sweet witchery did not enthral; and, when the singer ceased, nothing but soft sighs broke the impressive silence. Somewhere about midnight the Councillor was heard talking violently, and another male voice seemed, to judge from the tones, to be reproaching him, whilst at intervals the broken words of a sobbing girl could be detected. The Councillor continued to shout with increasing violence, until he fell into that drawling, singing way that you know. He was interrupted by a loud scream from the girl—and then all was as still as death. Suddenly, a loud racket was heard on the stairs; a young man rushed out sobbing, threw himself into a post-chaise which stood below, and drove rapidly away. The next day the Councillor was very cheerful, and nobody had the courage to question him about the events of the previous night. But, on inquiring of the housekeeper, we gathered that the Councillor had brought home with him an extraordinarily pretty young lady whom he called Antonia, and she it was who had sung so beautifully. A young man also had come along with them; he had treated Antonia very tenderly, and must evidently have been her betrothed. But he, since the Councillor peremptorily insisted

on it, had had to go away again in a hurry. What the relations between Antonia and the Councillor are has remained until now a secret, but this much is certain, that he tyrannises over the poor girl in the most hateful fashion. He watches her as Doctor Bartholo watches his ward in the "Barber of Seville"; she hardly dare show herself at the window; and if, yielding now and again to her earnest entreaties, he takes her into society, he follows her with Argus' eyes, and will on no account suffer a musical note to be sounded, far less let Antonia sing—indeed, she is not permitted to sing in his own house. Antonia's singing on that memorable night has, therefore, come to be regarded by the townspeople in the light of a tradition of some marvellous wonder that suffices to stir the heart and the fancy; and even those who did not hear it often exclaim, whenever any other singer attempts to display her powers in the place, 'What sort of a wretched squeaking do you call that? Nobody but Antonia knows how to sing.'"

Having a singular weakness for such like fantastic histories, I found it necessary, as may easily be imagined, to make Antonia's acquaintance. I myself had often enough heard the popular sayings about her singing, but had never imagined that that exquisite *artiste* was living in the place, held a captive in the bonds of this eccentric Krespel like the victim of a tyrannous sorcerer. Naturally enough, in my dreams on

the following night I heard Antonia's marvellous voice, and, as she besought me in the most touching manner in a glorious *adagio* movement (very ridiculously, it seemed to me that I had composed it myself) to save her, I soon resolved, like a second Astolpho, to penetrate into Krespel's house, as if into another Alcina's magic castle, and deliver the queen of song from her ignominious fetters.

It all came about in a different way from what I had expected: I had seen the Councillor scarcely more than two or three times, and eagerly discussed with him the best method of constructing violins, when he invited me to call and see him. I did so; and he showed me his treasures of violins. There were fully thirty of them hanging up in a closet; one among them bore conspicuously all the marks of great antiquity (a carved lion's head, etc.), and, hung up higher than the rest, and surmounted by a crown of flowers, it seemed to exercise a queenly supremacy over them. "This violin," said Krespel, on my making some inquiry relative to it—"this violin is a very remarkable and curious specimen of the work of some unknown master, probably of Tartini's age. I am perfectly convinced that there is something especially exceptional in its inner construction, and that, if I took it to pieces, a secret would be revealed to me which I have long been seeking to discover, but—laugh at me if you like—this senseless thing which only gives signs of

life and sound as I make it, often speaks to me in a strange way of itself. The first time I played upon it, I somehow fancied that I was only the magnetiser who has the power of moving his subject to reveal, of his own accord in words, the visions of his inner nature. Don't go away with the belief that I am such a fool as to attach even the slightest importance to such fantastic notions, and yet it's certainly strange that I could never prevail upon myself to cut open that dumb lifeless thing there. I am very pleased now that I have not cut it open, for, since Antonia has been with me, I sometimes play to her upon this violin. For Antonia is fond of it—very fond of it." As the Councillor uttered these words with visible signs of emotion, I felt encouraged to hazard the question, "Will you not play it for me, Councillor?" Krespel made a wry face, and falling into his drawling, singing way, said, "No, my good sir!" and that was an end of the matter. Then I had to look at all sorts of rare curiosities, the greater part of them childish trifles; at last, thrusting his arm into a chest, he brought out a folded piece of paper, which he pressed into my hand, adding solemnly, "You are a lover of art; take this present as a priceless memento, which you must value at all times above everything else." Therewith he took me by the shoulders, and gently pushed me toward the door, embracing me on the threshold. That is to say, I was in a symbolical manner virtually kicked out of

doors. Unfolding the paper, I found a piece of a first string of a violin, about an eighth of an inch in length, with the words, "A piece of the treble string with which the deceased Stamitz strung his violin for the last concert at which he ever played."

This summary dismissal at mention of Antonia's name led me to infer that I should never see her; but I was mistaken, for, on my second visit to the Councillor's, I found her in his room, assisting him to put a violin together. At first Antonia did not make a strong impression; but soon I found it impossible to tear myself away from her blue eyes, her sweet rosy lips, her uncommonly graceful, lovely form. She was very pale; but a shrewd remark or a merry sally would call up a winning smile on her face and suffuse her cheeks with a deep burning flush, which, however, soon faded away to a faint rosy glow. My conversation with her was quite unconstrained, and yet I saw nothing whatever of the Argus-like watchings on Krespel's part that the Professor had imputed to him; on the contrary, his behaviour moved along the customary lines; nay, he even seemed to approve of my conversing with Antonia. So I often stepped in to see the Councillor; and, as we became accustomed to each other's society, a singular, homelike feeling, taking possession of our little circle of three, filled our hearts with inward happiness. I still continued to derive exquisite enjoyment from the Councillor's strange

crochets and oddities; but it was of course, Antonia's irresistible charms alone which attracted me, and led me to put up with a good deal which I should otherwise, in the frame of mind in which I then was, have impatiently shunned. For it only too often happened that, in the Councillor's characteristic extravagance, there was mingled much that was dull and tiresome; and it was in a special degree irritating to me that, as often as I turned the conversation upon music, and particularly upon singing, he was sure to interrupt me, with that sardonic smile upon his face and those repulsive singing tones of his, by some remark of a quite opposite tendency, very often of a commonplace character. From the great distress which at such times Antonia's glances betrayed, I perceived that he did it only to deprive me of a pretext for calling upon her for a song. But I didn't relinquish my design. The hindrances which the Councillor threw in my way only strengthened my resolution to overcome them; I *must* hear Antonia sing if I were not to pine away in reveries and dim aspirations for want of hearing her.

One evening, Krespel was in an uncommonly good humour; he had been taking an old Cremona violin to pieces, and had discovered that the sound-post was fixed half a line more obliquely than usual—an important discovery!—one of incalculable advantage in the practical work of making violins! I succeeded in setting him off at full speed on his hobby of the true

art of violin-playing. Mention of the way in which the old masters picked up their dexterity in execution from really great singers (which was what Krespel happened just then to be expatiating upon) naturally paved the way for the remark that now the practice was the exact opposite of this—the vocal score erroneously following the affected and abrupt transitions and rapid scaling of the instrumentalists. "What is more nonsensical," I cried, leaping from my chair, running to the piano, and opening it quickly—"what is more nonsensical than such an execrable style as this, which, far from being music, is much more like the noise of peas rolling across the floor?" At the same time, I sang several of the modern *fermatas*, which rush up and down and hum like a well-spun peg-top, striking a few villainous chords by way of accompaniment. Krespel laughed outrageously, and screamed, "Ha! ha! methinks I hear our German-Italians, or our Italian-Germans, struggling with an aria from Pucitta, or Portogallo, or some other *Maestro di capella*, or rather *schiavo d'un primo uomo*." Now, thought I, now's the time; so, turning to Antonia, I remarked, "Antonia knows nothing of such singing as that, I believe?" At the same time I stuck up one of old Leonardo Leo's beautiful soul-stirring songs. Then Antonia's cheeks glowed; heavenly radiance sparkled in her eyes, which grew full of reawakened inspiration; she hastened to the piano; she opened her lips; but,

at that very moment, Krespel pushed her away, grasped me by the shoulders, and, with a shriek that rose up to a tenor pitch, cried, "My son—my son—my son!" And then he immediately went on, singing very softly and grasping my hand with a bow that was the pink of politeness, "In very truth, my esteemed and honourable student-friend, in very truth, it would be a violation of the codes of social intercourse, as well as of all good manners, were I to express aloud, and in a stirring way, my wish that here, on this very spot, the devil from hell would softly break your neck with his burning claws, and so, in a sense, make short work of you; but, setting that aside, you must acknowledge, my dearest friend, that it is rapidly growing dark, and there are no lamps burning to-night, so that, even though I did not kick you down-stairs at once, your darling limbs might still run a risk of suffering damage. Go home, by all means; and cherish a kind remembrance of your faithful friend, in case it should happen that you never—pray, understand me—in case you should never see him in his own house again." Therewith he embraced me, and, still keeping fast hold of me, turned with me slowly toward the door, so that I could not get another single look at Antonia. Of course it is plain enough that, in my position, I couldn't thrash the Councillor, though that is what he really deserved. The Professor enjoyed a good laugh at my expense, and assured me that I

had ruined for ever all hopes of retaining the Councillor's friendship. Antonia was too dear to me, I might say too holy, for me to go and play the part of the languishing lover, and stand gazing up at her window, or to fill the rôle of the lovesick adventurer. Completely upset, I went away from H——; but, as is usual in such cases, the brilliant colours of the picture of my fancy faded, and the recollection of Antonia, as well as of Antonia's singing (which I had never heard), often fell upon my heart like a soft, faint trembling light, comforting me.

Two years afterward, I received an appointment in B——, and set out on a journey to the south of Germany. The towers of H—— rose before me in the red, vaporous glow of the evening; the nearer I came, the more was I oppressed by an indescribable feeling of the most agonising distress; it lay upon me like a heavy burden; I could not breathe; I was obliged to get out of my carriage into the open air. But my anguish continued to increase until it became actual physical pain. Soon I seemed to hear the strains of a solemn chorale floating in the air; the sounds continued to grow more distinct; I realised the fact that they were men's voices chanting a church chorale. "What's that? what's that?" I cried, a burning stab darting as it were through my breast. "Don't you see?" replied the coachman, who was driving along beside me—"why, don't you see? They're burying somebody up yonder in yon church-

yard." And indeed we were near the churchyard; I saw a circle of men clothed in black standing round a grave which was on the point of being closed. Tears started to my eyes; I somehow fancied they were burying there all the joy and all the happiness of life. Moving on rapidly down the hill, I was no longer able to see into the churchyard; the chorale came to an end, and I perceived, not far distant from the gate, some of the mourners returning from the funeral. The Professor, with his niece on his arm, both in deep mourning, went close past me without noticing me. The young lady had her handkerchief pressed close to her eyes, and was weeping bitterly. In the frame of mind in which I then was, I could not possibly go into the town, so I sent on my servant with the carriage to the hotel where I usually put up, whilst I took a turn in the familiar neighbourhood, to get rid of a mood that was possibly due only to physical causes, such as heating on the journey, or the like. On arriving at a well-known avenue which leads to a pleasure resort, I came upon a most extraordinary spectacle. Councillor Krespel was being conducted by two mourners, from whom he appeared to be endeavouring to make his escape by all sorts of strange twists and turns. As usual, he was dressed in his own curious, home-made gray coat; but from his little cocked-hat, which he wore perched over one ear in military fashion, a long, narrow ribbon of black crape fluttered

backwards and forwards in the wind. Around his waist he had buckled a black sword-belt; but, instead of a sword, he had stuck a long fiddle-bow into it. A creepy shudder ran through my limbs: "He's insane," thought I, as I slowly followed them. The Councillor's companions led him as far as his house, where he embraced them, laughing loudly. They left him; and then his glance fell upon me, for I now stood near him. He stared at me fixedly for some time; then he cried in a hollow voice, "Welcome, my student friend! you also understand it!" Thereupon, he took me by the arm, and pulled me into the house, up the steps, into the room where the violins hung. They were all draped in black crape; the violin of the old master was missing; in its place was a cypress wreath. I knew what had happened. "Antonia! Antonia!" I cried, in inconsolable grief. The Councillor, with his arms crossed on his breast, stood beside me as if turned into stone. I pointed to the cypress wreath. "When she died," said he, in a very hoarse, solemn voice—"when she died, the sound-post of that violin broke into pieces with a ringing crack, and the sound-board was split from end to end. The faithful instrument could only live with her and in her; it lies beside her in the coffin, it has been buried with her." Deeply agitated, I sank down upon a chair, whilst the Councillor began to sing a gay song in a husky voice; it was truly horrible to see him hopping about on one foot,

and the crape strings (he still had his hat on) flying about the room and up to the violins hanging on the walls. Indeed, I could not repress a loud cry that rose to my lips when, on the Councillor's making an abrupt turn, the crape came all over me; I fancied he wanted to envelop me in it and drag me down into the horrible dark depths of insanity. Suddenly he stood still, and addressed me in his singing way: "My son! my son! why do you call out? Have you espied the angel of death? That always precedes the ceremony." Stepping into the middle of the room, he took the violin-bow out of his sword-belt, and, holding it over his head with both hands, broke it into a thousand pieces. Then, with a loud laugh, he cried: "Now you imagine my sentence is pronounced, don't you, my son? but it's nothing of the kind —not at all! not at all! Now I'm free—free—free—hurrah! I'm free! Now I shall make no more violins—no more violins—hurrah! no more violins!" This he sang to a horrible mirthful tune, again spinning round on one foot. Perfectly aghast, I was making the best of my way to the door, when he held me fast, saying quite calmly, "Stay, my student friend; pray don't think, from this outbreak of grief which is torturing me as if with the agonies of death, that I am insane; I do it only because, a short time ago, I made myself a dressing-gown in which I wanted to look like Fate or like God!" The Councillor then went on with a medley of

silly and awful rubbish, until he fell down utterly exhausted; I called up the old housekeeper, and was very pleased to find myself in the open air again.

I never doubted for a moment that Krespel had become insane; the Professor, however, asserted the contrary. "There are men," he remarked, "from whom nature or a special destiny has taken away the cover behind which the mad folly of the rest of us runs its course unobserved. They are like thin-skinned insects, which, as we watch the restless play of their muscles, seem to be misshapen, while, nevertheless, everything soon comes back into its proper form again. All that with us remains thought passes over with Krespel into action. That bitter scorn which the spirit that is wrapped up in the doings and dealings of the earth often has at hand, Krespel gives vent to in outrageous gestures and agile caprioles. But these are his lightning conductors. What comes up out of the earth he gives again to the earth, but what is divine, that he keeps; and so I believe that his inner consciousness, in spite of the apparent madness which springs from it to the surface, is as right as a trivet. To be sure, Antonia's sudden death grieves him sore, but I warrant that to-morrow will see him going along in his old jog-trot way as usual." And the Professor's prediction was almost literally filled. Next day the Councillor appeared to be just as he formerly was, only he averred that he would never make another violin, nor

yet ever play on another. And, as I learned later, he kept his word.

Hints which the Professor let fall confirmed my own private conviction that the so carefully guarded secret of the Councillor's relations to Antonia—nay, even her death—was a crime which must weigh heavily upon him, a crime that could not be atoned for. I determined that I would not leave H—— without taxing him with the offence which I conceived him to be guilty of; I determined to shake his heart down to its very roots, and so compel him to make open confession of the terrible deed. The more I reflected upon the matter, the clearer it grew in my own mind that Krespel must be a villain, and in the same proportion did my intended reproach, which assumed of itself the form of a real rhetorical masterpiece, wax more fiery and more impressive. Thus equipped and mightily incensed, I hurried to his house. I found him with a calm, smiling countenance making playthings. "How can peace," I burst out—"how can peace find lodgment even for a single moment in your breast, so long as the memory of your horrible deed preys like a serpent upon you?" He gazed at me in amazement, and laid his chisel aside. "What do you mean, my dear sir?" he asked; "pray take a seat." But, my indignation chafing me more and more, I went on to accuse him directly of having murdered Antonia, and to threaten him with the vengeance of the Eternal.

Further, as a newly full-fledged lawyer, full of my profession, I went so far as to give him to understand that I should leave no stone unturned to get a clue to the matter, and so deliver him here in this world into the hands of an earthly judge. I must confess that I was considerably disconcerted when, at the conclusion of my violent and pompous harangue, the Councillor, without answering so much as a single word, calmly fixed his eyes upon me as if expecting me to go on again. And this I did, indeed, attempt to do, but it sounded so ill-founded, and so stupid as well, that I soon grew silent again. Krespel gloated over my embarrassment, whilst a malicious ironical smile flitted across his face. Then he grew very grave, and addressed me in solemn tones. "Young man, no doubt you think I am foolish, insane; that I can pardon you, since we are both confined in the same mad-house; and you blame me for deluding myself with the idea that I am God the Father only because you imagine yourself to be God the Son. But how do you dare to insinuate yourself into the secrets, and to lay bare the hidden motives of a life that is strange to you and that must continue so? She has gone, and the mystery is solved." He ceased speaking, rose, and traversed the room backwards and forwards several times. I ventured to ask for an explanation; he fixed his eyes upon me, grasped me by the hand, and led me to the window, which he threw wide open.

Propping himself upon his arms, he leaned out, and, looking down into the garden, told me the history of his life. When he finished, I left him, touched and ashamed.

In a few words, his relations with Antonia arose in the following way. Twenty years before, the Councillor had been led into Italy by his favourite engrossing passion of hunting up and buying the best violins of the old masters. At that time, he had not yet begun to make them himself, and so, of course, he had not begun to take to pieces those which he bought. In Venice he heard the celebrated singer Angela ——i, who at that time was playing with splendid success as *prima donna* at St. Benedict's Theatre. His enthusiasm was awakened, not only by her art—which Signora Angela had indeed brought to a high pitch of perfection—but by her angelic beauty as well. He sought her acquaintance; and, in spite of all his rugged manners, he succeeded in winning her heart, principally through his bold and yet at the same time masterly violin-playing. Close intimacy led in a few weeks to marriage, which, however, was kept a secret, because Angela was unwilling to sever her connection with the theatre: neither did she wish to part with her professional name, that by which she was celebrated, nor to add to it the cacophonous "Krespel." With the most extravagant irony he described to me what a strange life of worry and torture Angela led him as soon as she became his wife. Krespel

was of opinion that more capriciousness and waywardness were concentrated in Angela's little person than in all the rest of the *prime donne* in the world put together. If he now and again presumed to stand up in his own defence, she let loose a whole army of abbots, musical composers, and students upon him, who, ignorant of his true connection with Angela, soundly rated him as a most intolerable, ungallant lover for not submitting to all the Signora's caprices. It was just after one of these stormy scenes that Krespel fled to Angela's country seat to try to forget, in playing fantasias on his Cremona violin, the annoyances of the day. But he had not been there long before the Signora, who had followed hard after him, stepped into the room. She was in an affectionate humour; she embraced her husband, overwhelmed him with sweet and languishing glances, and rested her pretty head on his shoulder. But Krespel, carried away into the world of music, continued to play on until the walls echoed again; thus he chanced to touch the Signora somewhat ungently with his arm and the fiddle-bow. She leaped back full of fury, shrieking that he was a "German brute," snatched the violin from his hands, and dashed it on the marble table into a thousand pieces. Krespel stood like a statue of stone before her; but then, as if awakening out of a dream, he seized her with the strength of a giant, and threw her out of the window of her own house; and, without troubling himself about anything

more, fled back to Venice—to Germany. It was not, however, until some time had elapsed that he had a clear recollection of what he had done; although he knew that the window was scarcely five feet from the ground, and although he was fully cognisant of the necessity, under the above-mentioned circumstances, of throwing the Signora out of the window, he yet felt troubled by a sense of painful uneasiness, and the more so since she had imparted to him, in no ambiguous terms, an interesting secret as to her condition. He hardly dared to make inquiries; and he was not a little surprised about eight months afterward at receiving a tender letter from his beloved wife, in which she made not the slightest allusion to what had taken place in her country house, only adding to the intelligence that she had been safely delivered of a sweet little daughter the heartfelt prayer that her dear husband and now a happy father would come at once to Venice. That, however, Krespel did not do; rather he appealed to a confidential friend for a more circumstantial account of the details, and learned that the Signora had alighted upon the soft grass as lightly as a bird, and that the sole consequences of the fall or shock had been psychic. That is to say, after Krespel's heroic deed, she had become completely altered; she never showed a trace of caprice, of her former freaks, or of her teasing habits; and the composer who wrote for the next carnival was the happiest fellow under the sun, since the

Signora was willing to sing his music without the scores and hundreds of changes which she at other times had insisted upon. "To be sure," added his friend, "there was every reason for preserving the secret of Angela's cure, else every day would see lady singers flying through windows." The Councillor was not a little excited at this news; he engaged horses; he took his seat in the carriage. "Stop!" he cried suddenly. "Why, there's not a shadow of doubt," he murmured to himself, "that as soon as Angela sets eyes upon me again, the evil spirit will recover his power and once more take possession of her. And, since I have already thrown her out of the window, what could I do if a similar case were to occur again? What would there be left for me to do?" He got out of the carriage, and wrote an affectionate letter to his wife, making graceful allusions to her tenderness in especially dwelling upon the fact that his tiny daughter had, like him, a little mole behind the ear, and—remained in Germany. Now ensued an active correspondence between them. Assurances of unchanged affection—invitations—laments over the absence of the beloved one—thwarted wishes—hopes, etc. —flew backwards and forwards from Venice to H——, from H—— to Venice. At length Angela came to Germany, and, as is well known, sang with brilliant success as *prima donna* at the great theatre in F——. Despite the fact that she was no longer young, she won all hearts by the irresistible charm of her wonderfully splended

singing. At that time, she had not lost her voice in the least degree. Meanwhile, Antonia had been growing up; and her mother never tired of writing to tell her father how it was that a singer of the first rank was developing in her. Krespel's friends in F—— also confirmed this intelligence, and urged him to come for once to F—— to see and admire this uncommon sight of two such glorious singers. They had not the slightest suspicion of the close relations in which Krespel stood to the pair. Willingly would he have seen with his own eyes the daughter who occupied so large a place in his heart, and who, moreover, often appeared to him in his dreams; but, as often as he thought upon his wife, he felt very uncomfortable, and so he remained at home among his broken violins.

There was a certain promising young composer, B—— of F——, who was found to have suddenly disappeared, nobody knew where. This young man fell so deeply in love with Antonia that, as she returned his love, he earnestly besought her mother to consent to an immediate union, sanctified, as it would further be, by art. Angela had nothing to urge against his suit; and the Councillor the more readily gave consent that the young composer's productions had found favour before his rigorous critical judgment. Krespel was expecting to hear of the consummation of the marriage, when he received, instead, a black-sealed envelope addressed in a strange hand. Doctor R—— conveyed to the Councillor the sad

intelligence that Angela had fallen seriously ill in consequence of a cold caught at the theatre, and that, during the night immediately preceding what was to have been Antonia's wedding-day, she had died. To him, the Doctor, Angela had disclosed the fact that she was Krespel's wife, and that Antonia was his daughter; he, Krespel, had better hasten, therefore, to take charge of the orphan. Notwithstanding that the Councillor was a good deal upset by this news of Angela's death, he soon began to feel that an antipathetic, disturbing influence had departed out of his life and that now, for the first time, he could begin to breathe freely. The very same day he set out for F——. You could not credit how heartrending was the Councillor's description of the moment when he first saw Antonia. Even in the fantastic oddities of his expression there was such a marvellous power of description that I am unable to give even so much as a faint indication of it. Antonia inherited all her mother's amiability and all her mother s charms, but not the repellent reverse of the medal. There was no chronic moral ulcer which might break out from time to time. Antonia's betrothed put in an appearance, whilst Antonia herself, fathoming with happy instinct the deeper-lying character of her wonderful father, sang one of old Padre Martini's motets which she knew Krespel, in the heyday of his courtship, had never grown tired of hearing her mother sing. The tears ran in streams down Krespel's

cheeks; even Angela he had never heard sing like that. Antonia's voice was of a very remarkable and altogether peculiar timbre: at one time it was like the sighing of an Æolian harp; at another, like the warbled gush of the nightingale. It seemed as if there was not room for such notes in the human breast. Antonia, blushing with joy and happiness, sang on and on—all her most beautiful songs, B—— playing between whiles as only enthusiasm that is intoxicated with delight can play. Krespel was at first transported with rapture; then he grew thoughtful—still—absorbed in reflection. At length he leaped to his feet, pressed Antonia to his heart, and begged her in a low husky voice, "Sing no more if you love me—my heart is bursting—I fear—I fear—don't sing again."

"No!" remarked the Councillor next day to Doctor R——, "when, as she sang, her blushes gathered into two dark red spots on her pale cheeks, I knew it had nothing to do with your nonsensical family likenesses—I knew it was what I dreaded." The Doctor, whose countenance had shown signs of deep distress from the very beginning of the conversation, replied: "Whether it arises from a too early taxing of her powers of song, or whether the fault is Nature's—enough; Antonia labours under an organic failure in the chest while it is from that, too, that her voice derives its wonderful power and its singular timbre, which I might almost say transcend the limits of human capabilities

of song. But it bears the announcement of her early death; for, if she continues to sing, I wouldn't give her at the most more than six months longer to live." Krespel's heart was lacerated as if by the stabs of hundreds of stinging knives. It was as if his life had been for the first time overshadowed by a beautiful tree full of the most magnificent blossoms, and now it was to be sawn to pieces at the roots, so that it could not grow green and blossom any more. His resolution was taken. He told Antonia all; he put the alternatives before her—whether she would follow her betrothed, and yield to his and the world's seductions, but with the certainty of dying early, or whether she would spread round her father in his old days that joy and peace which hitherto had been unknown to him, and so secure a long life. She threw herself sobbing into his arms, and he, knowing the heartrending trial that was before her, did not press for a more explicit declaration. He talked the matter over with her betrothed; but, notwithstanding that the latter averred that no note should ever cross Antonia's lips, the Councillor was only too well aware that even B—— could not resist the temptation of hearing her sing, at any rate arias of his own composition. And the world, the musical public, even though acquainted with the nature of the singer's affliction, would certainly not relinquish its claims to hear her; for, in cases where pleasure is concerned, people of this class are very selfish and cruel.

The Councillor disappeared from F—— along with Antonia, and came to H——. B—— was in despair when he learned that they had gone. He set out on their track, overtook them, and arrived at H—— at the same time that they did. "Let me see him only once, and then die!" entreated Antonia. "Die! die!" cried Krespel, wild with anger, an icy shudder running through him. His daughter, the only creature in the wide world who had awakened in him the springs of unknown joy, who alone had reconciled him to life, tore herself away from his heart, and he —he suffered the terrible trial to take place. B—— sat down to the piano; Antonia sang; Krespel fiddled away merrily, until the two red spots showed themselves on Antonia's cheeks. Then he bade her stop; and as B—— was taking leave of his betrothed, she suddenly fell to the floor with a loud scream. "I thought," continued Krespel in his narration—"I thought that she was, as I had anticipated, really dead; but, as I had prepared myself for the worst, my calmness did not leave me, nor my self-command desert me. I grasped B——, who stood like a silly sheep in his dismay, by the shoulders, and said (here the Councillor fell into his singing tone), 'Now that you, my estimable pianoforte-player, have, as you wished and desired, really murdered your betrothed, you may quietly take your departure; at least have the goodness to make yourself scarce before I run my bright hanger through your heart. My daughter, who, as

you see, is rather pale, could very well do with some colour from your precious blood. Make haste and run, for I might also hurl a nimble knife or two after you.' I must, I suppose, have looked rather formidable as I uttered these words, for, with a cry of the greatest terror, B—— tore himself loose from my grasp, rushed out of the room, and down the steps." Directly after B—— was gone, when the Councillor tried to lift up his daughter, who lay unconscious on the floor, she opened her eyes with a deep sigh, but soon closed them again as if about to die. Then Krespel's grief found vent aloud, and would not be comforted. The doctor, whom the old housekeeper had called in, pronounced Antonia's case a somewhat serious but by no means dangerous attack; and she did, indeed, recover more quickly than her father had dared to hope. She now clung to him with the most confiding childlike affection; she entered into his favourite hobbies—into his mad schemes and whims. She helped him take old violins to pieces and glue new ones together. "I won't sing again any more, but live for you," she often said, sweetly smiling upon him, after she had been asked to sing, and had refused. Such appeals, however, the Councillor was anxious to spare her as much as possible; therefore it was that he was unwilling to take her into society, and solicitously shunned all music. He well understood how painful it must be for her to forego altogether the exercise of that art which

she had brought to such a pitch of perfection. When the Councillor bought the wonderful violin that he had buried with Antonia, and was about to take it to pieces, she met him with such sadness in her face, and softly breathed the petition, "What! this as well?" By some power, which he could not explain, he felt impelled to leave this particular instrument unbroken, and to play upon it. Scarcely had he drawn the first few notes from it than Antonia cried aloud with joy, "Why, that's me!—now I shall sing again." And, in truth, there was something remarkably striking about the clear, silvery, bell-like tones of the violin; they seemed to have been engendered in the human soul. Krespel's heart was deeply moved; he played, too, better than ever. As he ran up and down the scale, playing bold passages with consummate power and expression, she clapped her hands together and cried with delight, "I did that well! I did that well."

From this time onward, her life was filled with peace and cheerfulness. She often said to the Councillor, "I should like to sing something, father." Then Krespel would take his violin down from the wall, and play her most beautiful songs, and her heart was right glad and happy. Shortly before my arrival in H——, the Councillor fancied one night that he heard somebody playing the piano in the adjoining room, and he soon made out distinctly that B—— was flourishing on the instrument in his usual style. He

wished to get up, but felt himself held down as if by a dead weight and lying as if fettered in iron bonds; he was utterly unable to move an inch. Then Antonia's voice was heard singing low and soft; soon, however, it began to rise and rise in volume until it became an ear-splitting *fortissimo*; and at length she passed over into a powerfully impressive song which B—— had once composed for her in the devotional style of the old masters. Krespel described his condition as being incomprehensible, for terrible anguish was mingled with a delight he had never before experienced. All at once he was surrounded by a dazzling brightness, in which he beheld B—— and Antonia locked in a close embrace, and gazing at each other in a rapture of ecstasy. The music of the song and of the pianoforte accompanying it went on without any visible signs that Antonia sang or that B—— touched the instrument. Then the Councillor fell into a sort of dead faint, whilst the images vanished away. On awakening, he still felt the terrible anguish of his dream. He rushed into Antonia's room. She lay on the sofa, her eyes closed, a sweet angelic smile on her face, her hands devoutly folded, and looking as if asleep and dreaming of the joys and raptures of heaven. But she was—dead.

PROVIDENCE AND THE GUITAR

BY

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

I

MONSIEUR LÉON BERTHELINI had a great care of his appearance, and sedulously suited his deportment to the costume of the hour. He affected something Spanish in his air, and something of the bandit, with a flavour of Rembrandt at home. In person he was decidedly small and inclined to be stout; his face was the picture of good-humour; his dark eyes, which were very expressive, told of a kind heart, a brisk, merry nature, and the most indefatigable spirits. If he had worn the clothes of the period, you would have set him down for a hitherto undiscovered hybrid between the barber, the innkeeper, and the affable dispensing chemist. But in the outrageous bravery of velvet jacket and flapped hat, with trousers that were more accurately described as fleshings, a white handkerchief cavalierly knotted at his neck, a shock of Olympian curls upon his brow, and his feet shod through all weathers in the slenderest of Molière shoes, you had but to look at him and you knew you were in the presence of a Great Creature. When

he wore an overcoat he scorned to pass the sleeves; a single button held it round his shoulders; it was tossed backward after the manner of a cloak, and carried with the gait and presence of an Almaviva. I am of opinion that M. Berthelini was nearing forty. But he had a boy's heart, gloried in his finery, and walked through life like a child in a perpetual dramatic performance. If he were not Almaviva after all, it was not for lack of making believe. And he enjoyed the artist's compensation. If he were not really Almaviva, he was sometimes just as happy as though he were.

I have seen him, at moments when he has fancied himself alone with his Maker, adopt so gay and chivalrous a bearing, and represent his own part with so much warmth and conscience, that the illusion became catching, and I believed implicitly in the Great Creature's pose.

But, alas! life cannot be entirely conducted on these principles; man cannot live by Almavivery alone; and the Great Creature, having failed upon several theatres, was obliged to step down every evening from his heights, and sing from half a dozen to a dozen comic songs, twang a guitar, keep a country audience in good humour, and preside finally over the mysteries of a tombola.

Madame Berthelini, who was art and part with him in these undignified labours, had perhaps a higher position in the scale of being, and enjoyed a natural dignity of her own. But her

heart was not any more rightly placed, for that would have been impossible; and she had acquired a little air of melancholy, attractive enough in its way, but not good to see like the wholesome, sky-scraping, boyish spirits of her lord.

He, indeed, swam like a kite on a fair wind high above earthly troubles. Detonations of temper were not infrequent in the zones he travelled; but sulky fogs and tearful depressions were there alike unknown. A well-delivered blow upon a table, or a noble attitude, imitated from Melingne or Frédéric, relieved his irritation like a vengeance. Though the heavens had fallen, if he had played his part with propriety, Berthelini had been content! And the man's atmosphere, if not his example, reacted on his wife; for the couple doted on each other, and although you would have thought they walked in different worlds, yet continued to walk hand in hand.

It chanced one day that Monsieur and Madame Berthelini descended with two boxes and a guitar in a fat case at the station of the little town of Castel-le-Gâchis, and the omnibus carried them with their effects to the Hotel of the Black Head. This was a dismal, conventual building in a narrow street, capable of standing siege when once the gates were shut, and smelling strangely, in the interior, of straw and chocolate and old feminine apparel. Berthelini paused upon the threshold with a painful premonition.

In some former state, it seemed to him, he had visited a hostelry that smelled not otherwise, and been ill received.

The landlord, a tragic person in a large felt hat, rose from a business table under the key-rack and came forward, removing his hat with both hands as he did so.

"Sir, I salute you. May I inquire what is your charge for artists?" inquired Berthelini, with a courtesy at once splendid and insinuating.

"For artists?" said the landlord. His countenance fell and the smile of welcome disappeared. "Oh, artists!" he added brutally; "four francs a day." And he turned his back upon these inconsiderable customers.

A commercial traveller is received, he also upon a reduction—yet is he welcome; yet can he command the fatted calf; but an artist, had he the manners of an Almaviva, were he dressed like Solomon in all his glory, is received like a dog, and served like a timid lady travelling alone.

Accustomed as he was to the rubs of his profession, Berthelini was unpleasantly affected by the landlord's manner.

"Elvira," said he to his wife, "mark my words: Castel-le-Gâchis is a tragic folly."

"Wait till we see what we take," replied Elvira.

"We shall take nothing," returned Berthelini; "we shall feed upon insults. I have an eye, Elvira; I have a spirit of divination; and this

place is accursed. The landlord has been discourteous, the Commissary will be brutal, the audience will be sordid and uproarious, and you will take a cold upon your throat. We have been besotted enough to come; the die is cast; it will be a second Sedan."

Sedan was a town hateful to the Berthelinis, not only from patriotism (for they were French, and answered after the flesh to the somewhat homely name of Duval), but because it had been the scene of their most sad reverses. In that place they had lain three weeks in pawn for their hotel bill, and had it not been for a surprising stroke of fortune they might have been lying there in pawn until this day. To mention the name of Sedan was for the Berthelinis to dip the brush in earthquake and eclipse. Count Almaviva slouched his hat with a gesture expressive of despair, and even Elvira felt as if ill-fortune had been personally invoked.

"Let us ask for breakfast," said she, with a woman's tact.

The Commissary of Police of Castel-le-Gâchis was a large red Commissary, pimpled, and subject to a strong cutaneous transpiration. I have repeated the name of his office because he was so very much more a Commissary than a man. The spirit of his dignity had entered into him. He carried his corporation as if it were something official. Whenever he insulted a common citizen it seemed to him as if he were adroitly flattering the Government by a side

wind; in default of dignity, he was brutal from an overweening sense of duty. His office was a den, whence passers-by could hear rude accents laying down, not the law, but the good pleasure of the Commissary.

Six several times in the course of the day did M. Berthelini hurry thither in quest of the requisite permission for his evening's entertainment; six several times he found the official was abroad. Léon Berthelini began to grow quite a familiar figure in the streets of Castel-le-Gâchis; he became a local celebrity, and was pointed out as "the man who was looking for the Commissary." Idle children attached themselves to his footsteps, and trotted after him back and forward between the hotel and the office. Léon might try as he liked; he might roll cigarettes, he might straddle, he might cock his hat at a dozen different jaunty inclinations—the part of Almaviva was, under the circumstances, difficult to play.

As he passed the market-place upon the seventh excursion, the Commissary was pointed out to him, where he stood, with his waistcoat unbuttoned and his hands behind his back, to superintend the sale and measurement of butter. Berthelini threaded his way through the market-stalls and baskets, and accosted the dignitary with a bow which was a triumph of the histrionic art.

"I have the honour," he asked, "of meeting M. le Commissaire?"

The Commissary was affected by the nobility of his address. He excelled Léon in the depth, if not in the airy grace, of his salutation.

"The honour," said he, "is mine!"

"I am," continued the strolling player, "I am, sir, an artist, and I have permitted myself to interrupt you on an affair of business. To-night I give a trifling musical entertainment at the Café of the Triumphs of the Plow—permit me to offer you this little programme—and I have come to ask you for the necessary authorisation."

At the word "artist," the Commissary had replaced his hat with an air of a person who, having condescended too far, should suddenly remember the duties of his rank.

"Go, go," said he; "I am busy—I am measuring butter."

"Heathen Jew!" thought Léon. "Permit me, sir," he resumed, aloud. "I have gone six times already——"

"Put up your bills if you choose," interrupted the Commissary. "In an hour or so I will examine your papers at the office. But now go; I am busy."

"Measuring butter!" thought Berthelini. "Oh, France, and it is for this that we made '93!"

The preparations were soon made; the bills posted, programmes laid on the dinner-table of every hotel in the town, and a stage erected at one end of the Café of the Triumphs of the Plow;

but when Léon returned to the office, the Commissary was once more abroad.

"He is like Madame Benoîton," thought Léon. "*Fichu Commissaire!*"

And just then he met the man face to face.

"Here, sir," said he, "are my papers. Will you be pleased to verify?"

But the Commissary was now intent upon dinner.

"No use," he replied, "no use; I am busy; I am quite satisfied. Give your entertainment."

And he hurried on.

"*Fichu Commissaire!*" thought Léon.

II

The audience was pretty large; and the proprietor of the café made a good thing of it in beer. But the Berthelinis exerted themselves in vain.

Léon was radiant in velveteen; he had a rakish way of smoking a cigarette between his songs that was worth money in itself; he underlined his comic points so that the dullest numskull in Castel-le-Gàchis had a notion when to laugh; and he handled his guitar in a manner worthy of himself. Indeed, his play with that instrument was as good as a whole romantic drama; it was so dashing, so florid, and so cavalier.

Elvira, on the other hand, sang her patriotic

and romantic songs with more than usual expression; her voice had charm and plangency; and as Léon looked at her, in her low-bodied maroon dress, with her arms bare to the shoulder, and a red flower set provocatively in her corset, he repeated to himself for the many hundredth time that she was one of the loveliest creatures in the world of women.

Alas! when she went round with the tambourine, the golden youth of Castel-le-Gâchis turned from her coldly. Here and there a single halfpenny was forthcoming; the net result of a collection never exceeded half a franc; and the Maire himself, after seven different applications, had contributed exactly twopence. A certain chill began to settle upon the artists themselves; it seemed as if they were singing to slugs; Apollo himself might have lost heart with such an audience. The Berthelinis struggled against the impression; they put their back into their work, they sang loud and louder, the guitar twanged like a living thing; and at last Léon arose in his might and burst with inimitable conviction into his great song, "*Y a des honnêtes gens partout!*" Never had he given more proof of his artistic mastery; it was his intimate, indefeasible conviction that Castel-le-Gâchis formed an exception to the law he was now lyrically proclaiming, and was peopled exclusively by thieves and bullies; and yet, as I say, he flung it down like a challenge, he trolled it forth like an article of faith; and his face so

beamed the while that you would have thought he must make converts of the benches.

He was at the top of his register, with his head thrown back and his mouth open, when the door was thrown violently open, and a pair of newcomers marched noisily into the café. It was the Commissary, followed by the Garde Champêtre.

The undaunted Berthelini still continued to proclaim, "*Y a des honnêtes gens partout!*" But now the sentiment produced an audible titter among the audience. Berthelini wondered why; he did not know the antecedents of the Garde Champêtre; he had never heard of a little story about postage-stamps. But the public knew all about the postage-stamps and enjoyed the coincidence hugely.

The Commissary planted himself upon a vacant chair with somewhat the air of Cromwell visiting the Rump, and spoke in occasional whispers to the Garde Champêtre, who remained respectfully standing at his back. The eyes of both were directed upon Berthelini, who persisted in his statement.

"*Y a des honnêtes gens partout,*" he was just chanting for the twentieth time; when up got the Commissary upon his feet and waved brutally to the singer with his cane.

"Is it me you want?" inquired Léon, stopping in his song.

"It is you," replied the potentate.

"*Fichu Commissaire!*" thought Léon, and he

descended from the stage and made his way to the functionary.

"How does it happen, sir," said the Commissary, swelling in person, "that I find you mountebanking in a public café without my permission?"

"Without?" cried the indignant Léon. "Permit me to remind you——"

"Come, come, sir!" said the Commissary, "I desire no explanations."

"I care nothing about what you desire," returned the singer. "I choose to give them, and I will not be gagged. I am an artist, sir, a distinction that you cannot comprehend. I received your permission, and stand here upon the strength of it; interfere with me who dare."

"You have not got my signature, I tell you," cried the Commissary. "Show me my signature! Where is my signature?"

That was just the question; where was his signature? Léon recognised that he was in a hole; but his spirit rose with the occasion, and he blustered nobly, tossing back his curls. The Commissary played up to him in the character of tyrant; and as the one leaned farther forward, the other leaned farther back—majesty confronting fury. The audience had transferred their attention to this new performance, and listened with that silent gravity common to all Frenchmen in the neighbourhood of the Police. Elvira had sat down: she was used to these distractions, and it was rather melancholy than fear that now oppressed her.

"Another word," cried the Commissary, "and I arrest you."

"Arrest me?" shouted Léon. "I defy you!"

"I am the Commissary of Police," said the official.

Léon commanded his feelings, and replied, with great delicacy of innuendo, "So it would appear."

The point was too refined for Castel-le-Gâchis; it did not raise a smile; and as for the Commissary, he simply bade the singer follow him to his office, and directed his proud footsteps toward the door. There was nothing for it but to obey. Léon did so with a proper pantomime of indifference, but it was a leek to eat, and there was no denying it.

The Maire had slipped out and was already waiting at the Commissary's door. Now the Maire, in France, is the refuge of the oppressed. He stands between his people and the boisterous rigours of the Police. He can sometimes understand what is said to him; he is not always puffed up beyond measure by his dignity. 'Tis a thing worth the knowledge of travellers. When all seems over, and a man has made up his mind to injustice, he has still, like the heroes of romance, a little bugle at his belt whereon to blow; and the Maire, a comfortable *deus ex machina*, may still descend to deliver him from the minions of the law. The Maire of Castel-le-Gâchis, although inaccessible to the charms of music as retailed by the Berthelinis, had no hesitation

whatever as to the rights of the matter. He instantly fell foul of the Commissary in very high terms, and the Commissary, pricked by this humiliation, accepted battle on the point of fact. The argument lasted some little while with varying success, until at length victory inclined so plainly to the Commissary's side that the Maire was fain to reassert himself by an exercise of authority. He had been out-argued, but he was still the Maire. And so, turning from his interlocutor, he briefly but kindly recommended Léon to get back instanter to his concert.

"It is already growing late," he added.

Léon did not wait to be told twice. He returned to the Café of the Triumphs of the Plow with all expedition. Alas, the audience had melted away during his absence; Elvira was sitting in a very disconsolate attitude on the guitar-box; she had watched the company dispersing by twos and threes, and the prolonged spectacle had somewhat overwhelmed her spirits. Each man, she reflected, retired with a certain proportion of her earnings in his pocket, and she saw to-night's board and to-morrow's railway expenses, and finally even to-morrow's dinner, walk one after another out of the café door and disappear into the night.

"What was it?" she asked, languidly.

But Léon did not answer. He was looking round him on the scene of defeat. Scarce a score of listeners remained, and these of the

least promising sort. The minute-hand of the clock was already climbing upward toward eleven.

"It's a lost battle," said he, and then, taking up the money-box, he turned it out. "Three francs seventy-five!" he cried, "as against four of board and six of railway fares; and no time for the tombola! Elvira, this is Waterloo." And he sat down and passed both hands desperately among his curls. "O *Fichu Commissaire!*" he cried, "*Fichu Commissaire!*"

"Let us get the things together and be off," returned Elvira. "We might try another song, but there is not six halfpence in the room."

"Six halfpence?" cried Léon, "six hundred thousand devils! There is not a human creature in the town—nothing but pigs and dogs and commissiares! Pray Heaven, we get safe to bed."

"Don't imagine things!" exclaimed Elvira, with a shudder.

And with that they set to work on their preparations. The tobacco-jar, the cigarette-holder, the three papers of shirt-studs which were to have been the prizes of the tombola had the tombola come off, were made into a bundle with the music; the guitar was stowed into the fat guitar-case; and Elvira having thrown a thin shawl about her neck and shoulders, the pair issued from the café and set off for the Black Hand.

As they crossed the market-place the church

bell rang out eleven. It was a dark, mild night, and there was no one in the streets.

"It is all very fine," said Léon; "but I have a presentiment. The night is not yet done."

III

The "Black Head" presented not a single chink of light upon the street, and the carriage-gate was closed.

"This is unprecedented," observed Léon. "An inn closed by five minutes after eleven! And there were several commercial travellers in the café up to a late hour. Elvira, my heart misgives me. Let us ring the bell."

The bell had a potent note; and being swung under the arch, it filled the house from top to bottom with surly, clanging reverberations. The sound accentuated the conventual appearance of the building; a wintry sentiment, a thought of prayer and mortification, took hold upon Elvira's mind; and as for Léon, he seemed to be reading the stage-directions for a lugubrious fifth act.

"This is your fault," said Elvira; "this is what comes of fancying things!"

Again Léon pulled the bell-rope; again the solemn tocsin awoke the echoes of the inn; and ere they had died away, a light glimmered in the carriage entrance, and a powerful voice was heard upraised and tremulous with wrath.

"What's all this?" cried the tragic host

through the spars of the gate. "Hard upon twelve, and you come clamouring like Prussians at the door of a respectable hotel? Oh!" he cried, "I know you now! Common singers! People in trouble with the police! And you present yourselves at midnight like lords and ladies? Be off with you!"

"You will permit me to remind you," replied Léon, in thrilling tones, "that I am a guest in your house, that I am properly inscribed, and that I have deposited baggage to the value of four hundred francs."

"You cannot get in at this hour," returned the man. "This is no thieves' tavern, for Mohocks and night-rakes and organ-grinders."

"Brute!" cried Elvira, for the organ-grinders touched her home.

"Then I demand my baggage," said Léon, with unabated dignity.

"I know nothing of your baggage," replied the landlord.

"You detain my baggage? You dare to detain my baggage?" cried the singer.

"Who are you?" returned the landlord. "It is dark—I cannot recognise you."

"Very well, then—you detain my baggage," concluded Léon. "You shall smart for this. I will weary out your life with persecutions; I will drag you from court to court; if there is justice to be had in France, it shall be rendered between you and me. And I will make you a byword—I will put you in a song—a scurrilous

song—an indecent song—a popular song—which the boys shall sing to you in the street, and come and howl through these spars at midnight."

He had gone on raising his voice at every phrase, for all the while the landlord was very placidly retiring; and now, when the last glimmer of light had vanished from the arch, and the last footstep died away in the interior, Léon turned to his wife with a heroic countenance.

"Elvira," said he, "I have now a duty in life. I shall destroy that man as Eugène Sue destroyed the concierge. Let us come at once to the Gendarmerie and begin our vengeance."

He picked up the guitar-case, which had been propped against the wall, and they set forth through the silent and ill-lighted town with burning hearts.

The Gendarmerie was concealed beside the telegraph office at the bottom of a vast court, which was partly laid out in gardens; and here all the shepherds of the public lay locked in grateful sleep. It took a deal of knocking to waken one; and he, when he came at last to the door, could find no other remark but that "it was none of his business."

Léon reasoned with him, threatened him, besought him: "Here," he said, "was Madame Berthelini in evening dress—a delicate woman—in an interesting condition"—the last was thrown in, I fancy, for effect; and to all this the man-at-arms made the same answer:

"It is none of my business," said he.

"Very well," said Léon; "then we shall go to the Commissary."

Thither they went; the office was closed and dark; but the house was close by, and Léon was soon swinging the bell like a madman. The Commissary's wife appeared at a window. She was a thread-paper creature, and informed them that the Commissary had not yet come home.

"Is he at the Maire's?" demanded Léon.

She thought that was not unlikely.

"Where is the Maire's house?" he asked.

And she gave him some rather vague information on that point.

"Stay you here, Elvira," said Léon, "lest I should miss him by the way. If, when I return, I find you here no longer, I shall follow at once to the Black Head."

And he set out to find the Maire's. It took him some ten minutes' wandering among blind lanes, and when he arrived it was already half an hour past midnight. A long white garden-wall overhung by some thick chestnuts, a door with a letter-box, and an iron bell-pull—that was all that could be seen of the Maire's domicile. Léon took the bell-pull in both hands, and danced furiously upon the sidewalk. The bell itself was just upon the other side of the wall; it responded to his activity, and scattered an alarming clangour far and wide into the night.

A window was thrown open in a house across the street, and a voice inquired the cause of this untimely uproar.

"I wish the Maire," said Léon.

"He has been in bed this hour," returned the voice.

"He must get up again," retorted Léon, and he was for tackling the bell-pull once more.

"You will never make him hear," responded the voice. "The garden is of great extent, the house is at the farther end, and both the Maire and his housekeeper are deaf."

"Aha!" said Léon, pausing. "The Maire is deaf, is he? That explains." And he thought of the evening's concert with a momentary feeling of relief. "Ah!" he continued, "and so the Maire is deaf, and the garden vast, and the house at the far end?"

"And you might ring all night," added the voice, "and be none the better for it. You would only keep me awake."

"Thank you, neighbour," replied the singer. "You shall sleep."

And he made off again at his best pace for the Commissary's. Elvira was still walking to and fro before the door.

"He has not come?" asked Léon.

"Not he," she replied.

"Good," returned Léon. "I am sure our man's inside. Let me see the guitar-case. I shall lay this siege in form, Elvira; I am angry; I am indignant; I am truculently inclined; but I thank my Maker I have still a sense of fun. The unjust judge shall be importuned in a serenade, Elvira. Set him up—and set him up."

He had the case opened by this time, struck a few chords, and fell into an attitude which was irresistibly Spanish.

"Now," he continued, "feel your voice. Are you ready? Follow me!"

The guitar twanged, and the two voices upraised, in harmony and with a startling loudness, the chorus of a song of old Béranger's:

"Commissaire! Commissaire!
Colin bat sa ménagère."

The stones of Castel-le-Gâchis thrilled at this audacious innovation. Hitherto had the night been sacred to repose and nightcaps; and now what was this? Window after window was opened; matches scratched, and candles began to flicker; swollen sleepy faces peered forth into the starlight. There were the two figures before the Commissary's house, each bolt upright, with head thrown back and eyes interrogating the starry heavens; the guitar wailed, shouted, and reverberated like half an orchestra; and the voices, with a crisp and spirited delivery, hurled the opprobrious burden at the Commissary's window. All the echoes repeated the functionary's name. It was more like an entr'acte in a farce of Molière's than a passage of real life in Castel-le-Gâchis.

The Commissary, if he was not the first, was not the last of the neighbours to yield to the influence of music, and furiously throw open the

window of his bedroom. He was beside himself with rage. He leaned far over the window-sill, raving and gesticulating; the tassel of his white nightcap danced like a thing of life; he opened his mouth to dimensions hitherto unprecedented, and yet his voice, instead of escaping from it in a roar, came forth shrill and choked and tottering. A little more serenading, and it was clear he would be better acquainted with the apoplexy.

I scorn to reproduce his language; he touched upon too many serious topics by the way for a quiet story-teller. Although he was known for a man who was prompt with his tongue, and had a power of strong expression at command, he excelled himself so remarkably this night that one maiden lady, who had got out of bed, like the rest, to hear the serenade, was obliged to shut her window at the second clause. Even what she had heard disquieted her conscience; and next day she said she scarcely reckoned herself as a maiden lady any longer.

Léon tried to explain his predicament, but he received nothing but threats of arrest by way of answer.

"If I come down to you!" cried the Commissary.

"Ay," said Léon, "do."

"I will not!" cried the Commissary.

"You dare not!" answered Léon.

At that the Commissary closed his window.

"All is over," said the singer. "The serenade

was perhaps ill-judged. These boors have no sense of humour."

"Let us get away from here," said Elvira, with a shiver. "All these people looking—it is so rude and so brutal." And then giving way once more to passion—"Brutes!" she cried aloud to the candle-lighted spectators—"brutes! brutes! brutes!"

"*Sauve qui peut*," said Léon. "You have done it now!"

And taking the guitar in one hand and the case in the other, he led the way, with something too precipitate to be merely called precipitation, from the scene of this absurd adventure.

IV

To the west of Castel-le-Gâchis four rows of venerable lime-trees formed, in this starry night, a twilighted avenue with two side aisles of pitch darkness. Here and there stone benches were disposed between the trunks. There was not a breath of wind; a heavy atmosphere of perfume hung about the alleys; and every leaf stood stock still upon its twig. Hither, after vainly knocking at an inn or two, the Berthelinis came at length to pass the night. After an amiable contention, Léon insisted on giving his coat to Elvira, and they sat down together on the first bench in silence. Léon made a cigarette, which he smoked to an end, looking up into the trees and, beyond them, at the constellations, of which

he tried vainly to recall the names. The silence was broken by the church bell; it rang the four quarters on a light and tinkling measure; then followed a single deep stroke that died slowly away with a thrill; and stillness resumed its empire.

"One," said Léon. "Four hours till daylight. It is warm; it is starry; I have matches and tobacco. Do not let us exaggerate, Elvira—the experience is positively charming. I feel a glow within me; I am born again. This is the poetry of life. Think of Cooper's novels, my dear."

"Léon," she said fiercely, "how can you talk such wicked, infamous nonsense? To pass all night out of doors—it is like a nightmare! We shall die."

"You suffer yourself to be led away," he replied soothingly. "It is not unpleasant here; only you brood. Come, now, let us repeat a scene. Shall we try Alceste and Célimène? No? Or a passage from the 'Two Orphans?' Come, now, it will occupy your mind: I will play up to you as I never have played before; I feel art moving in my bones."

"Hold your tongue," she cried, "or you will drive me mad! Will nothing solemnise you—not even this hideous situation?"

"Oh, hideous!" objected Léon. "Hideous is not the word. Why, where would you be? '*Dites, la jeune belle, où voulez-vous aller?*'" he carolled. "Well, now," he went on, opening the guitar-case, "there's another idea for you—sing.

Sing '*Dites, la jeune belle!*' It will compose your spirits, Elvira. I am sure."

And without waiting an answer, he began to strum a symphony. The first chords awoke a young man who was lying asleep upon a neighbouring bench.

"Hullo!" cried the young man. "Who are you?"

"Under which king, Bezonian?" declaimed the artist. "Speak or die!"

Or if it was not exactly that, it was something to much the same purpose from a French tragedy.

The young man drew near in the twilight. He was a tall, powerful, gentlemanly fellow, with a somewhat puffy face, dressed in a gray tweed suit, with a deer-stalker hat of the same material; and as he now came forward he carried a knapsack slung upon one arm.

"Are you camping out here, too?" he asked, with a strong English accent. "I'm not sorry for company."

Léon explained their misadventure; and the other told them that he was a Cambridge undergraduate on a walking-tour, that he had run short of money, could no longer pay for his night's lodging, had already been camping out for two nights, and feared he should require to continue the same manœuvre for at least two nights more.

"Luckily, it's jolly weather," he concluded.

"You hear that, Elvira," said Léon. "Madame Berthelini," he went on, "is ridiculously affected

by this trifling occurrence. For my part, I find it romantic and far from uncomfortable; or at least," he added, shifting on the stone bench, "not quite so uncomfortable as might have been expected. But pray be seated."

"Yes," returned the undergraduate, sitting down, "it's rather nice than otherwise when once you're used to it; only it's devilish difficult to get washed. I like the fresh air and these stars and things."

"Aha!" said Léon. "Monsieur is an artist."

"An artist?" returned the other, with a blank stare. "Not if I know it!"

"Pardon me," said the actor. "What you said this moment about the orbs of heaven——"

"Oh, nonsense!" cried the Englishman. "A fellow may admire the stars, and be anything he likes."

"You have an artist's nature, however, Mr. ——. I beg your pardon; may I, without indiscretion, inquire your name?" asked Léon.

"My name is Stubbs," replied the Englishman.

"I thank you," returned Léon. "Mine is Berthelini—Léon Berthelini, ex-artist of the theatres of Montrouge, Belleville, and Montmartre. Humble as you see me, I have created with applause more than one important rôle. The Press were unanimous in praise of my Howling Devil of the Mountains, in the piece of the same name. Madame, whom I now present to you, is herself an artist, and, I must not omit to

state, a better artist than her husband. She also is a creator; she created nearly twenty successful songs at one of the principal Parisian music-halls. But, to continue, I was saying you had an artist's nature, Monsieur Stubbs, and you must permit me to be a judge in such a question. I trust you will not falsify your instincts; let me beseech you to follow the career of an artist."

"Thank you," returned Stubbs, with a chuckle. "I'm going to be a banker."

"No," said Léon; "do not say so. Not that. A man with such a nature as yours should not derogate so far. What are a few privations here and there, so long as you are working for a high and noble goal?"

"This fellow's mad," thought Stubbs; "but the woman's rather pretty, and he's not bad fun himself, if you come to that." What he said was different. "I thought you said you were an actor?"

"I certainly did so," replied Léon. "I am one, or, alas! I was."

"And so you want me to be an actor, do you?" continued the undergraduate. "Why, man, I could never so much as learn the stuff; my memory's like a sieve; and as for acting, I've no more idea than a cat."

"The stage is not the only course," said Léon. "Be a sculptor, be a dancer, be a poet or a novelist; follow your heart, in short, and do some thorough work before you die."

"And do you call all these things *art?*" inquired Stubbs.

"Why, certainly!" returned Léon. "Are they not all branches?"

"Oh! I didn't know," replied the Englishman. "I thought an artist meant a fellow who painted."

The singer stared at him in some surprise.

"It is the difference of language," he said at last. "This Tower of Babel—when shall we have paid for it? If I could speak English you would follow me more readily."

"Between you and me, I don't believe I should," replied the other. "You seem to have thought a devil of a lot about this business. For my part, I admire the stars, and like to have them shining—it's so cheery—but hang me if I had an idea it had anything to do with art! It's not in my line, you see. I'm not intellectual; I have no end of trouble to scrape through my exams., I can tell you! But I'm not a bad sort at bottom," he added, seeing his interlocutor looked distressed even in the dim starshine, "and I rather like the play, and music, and guitars, and things."

Léon had a perception that the understanding was incomplete. He changed the subject.

"And so you travel on foot?" he continued. "How romantic! How courageous! And how are you pleased with my land? How does the scenery affect you among these wild hills of ours?"

"Well, the fact is——" began Stubbs. He was about to say that he didn't care for scenery, which was not at all true, being, on the contrary, only an athletic undergraduate pretension; but he had begun to suspect that Berthelini liked a different sort of meat, and substituted something else: "The fact is, I think it jolly. They told me it was no good up here; even the guide-book said so; but I don't know what they meant. I think it is deuced pretty—upon my word, I do."

At this moment, in the most unexpected manner, Elvira burst into tears.

"My voice!" she cried. "Léon, if I stay here longer I shall lose my voice!"

"You shall not stay another moment," cried the actor. "If I have to beat in a door, if I have to burn the town, I shall find you shelter."

With that, he replaced the guitar, and comforting her with some caresses, drew her arm through his.

"Monsieur Stubbs," said he, taking off his hat, "the reception I offer you is rather problematical; but let me beseech you to give us the pleasure of your society. You are a little embarrassed for the moment; you must, indeed, permit me to advance what may be necessary. I ask it as a favour; we must not part so soon after having met so strangely."

"Oh, come, you know," said Stubbs, "I can't let a fellow like you——" And there he paused, feeling somehow or other on a wrong tack.

"I do not wish to employ menaces," continued Léon, with a smile; "but if you refuse, indeed I shall not take it kindly."

"I don't quite see my way out of it," thought the undergraduate; and then, after a pause, he said, aloud and ungraciously enough, "All right. I—I'm very much obliged, of course." And he proceeded to follow them, thinking in his heart, "But it's bad form, all the same, to force an obligation on a fellow."

V

Léon strode ahead as if he knew exactly where he was going; the sobs of Madame were still faintly audible, and no one uttered a word. A dog barked furiously in a courtyard as they went by; then the church clock struck two, and many domestic clocks followed or preceded it in piping tones. And just then Berthelini spied a light. It burned in a small house on the outskirts of the town, and thither the party now directed their steps.

"It is always a chance," said Léon.

The house in question stood back from the street behind an open space, part garden, part turnip-field; and several outhouses stood forward from either wing at right angles to the front. One of these had recently undergone some change. An enormous window, looking toward the north, had been effected in the wall and roof, and Léon began to hope it was a studio.

"If it's only a painter," he said, with a chuckle, "ten to one we get as good a welcome as we want."

"I thought painters were principally poor," said Stubbs.

"Ah!" cried Léon, "you do not know the world as I do. The poorer the better for us."

And the trio advanced into the turnip-field.

The light was in the ground floor; as one window was brightly illuminated and two others more faintly, it might be supposed that there was a single lamp in one corner of a large apartment; and a certain tremulousness and temporary dwindling showed that a live fire contributed to the effect. The sound of a voice now became audible; and the trespassers paused to listen. It was pitched in a high, angry key, but had still a good, full, and masculine note in it. The utterance was voluble—too voluble even to be quite distinct: a stream of words, rising and falling, with ever and again a phrase thrown out by itself, as if the speaker reckoned on its virtue.

Suddenly another voice joined in. This time it was a woman's; and if the man were angry, the woman was incensed to the degree of fury. There was that absolutely blank composure known to suffering males; that colourless unnatural speech which shows a spirit accurately balanced between homicide and hysterics; the tone in which the best of women sometimes utter words worse than death to those most dear to them. If Abstract Bones-and-Sepulchre were to

be endowed with the gift of speech, thus, and not otherwise, would it discourse. Léon was a brave man, and I fear he was somewhat sceptically given (he had been educated in a Papistical country), but the habit of childhood prevailed, and he crossed himself devoutly. He had met several women in his career. It was obvious that his instinct had not deceived him, for the male voice broke forth instantly in a towering passion.

The undergraduate, who had not understood the significance of the woman's contribution, pricked up his ears at the change upon the man.

"There's going to be a free fight," he opined.

There was another retort from the woman, still calm but a little higher.

"Hysterics?" asked Léon of his wife. "Is that the stage direction?"

"How should I know?" returned Elvira, somewhat tartly.

"Oh, woman, woman!" said Léon, beginning to open the guitar-case. "It is one of the burdens of my life, Monsieur Stubbs; they support each other; they always pretend there is no system; they say it's nature. Even Madame Berthelini, who is a dramatic artist!"

"You are heartless, Léon," said Elvira; "that woman is in trouble."

"And the man, my angel?" inquired Berthelini, passing the ribbon of his guitar. "And the man, *m'amour*?"

"He is a man," she answered.

"You hear that?" said Léon to Stubbs. "It is not too late for you. Mark the intonation. And now," he continued, "what are we to give them?"

"Are you going to sing?" asked Stubbs.

"I am a troubadour," replied Léon. "I claim a welcome by and for my art. If I were a banker could I do as much?"

"Well, you wouldn't need, you know," answered the undergraduate.

"Egad," said Léon, "but that's true. Elvira, that is true."

"Of course it is," she replied. "Did you not know it?"

"My dear," answered Léon, impressively, "I know nothing but what is agreeable. Even my knowledge of life is a work of art superiorly composed. But what are we to give them? It should be something appropriate."

Visions of "Let dogs delight" passed through the undergraduate's mind; but it occurred to him that the poetry was English and that he did not know the air. Hence he contributed no suggestion.

"Something about our houselessness," said Elvira.

"I have it," cried Léon. And he broke forth into a song of Pierre Dupont's:

"Savez-vous où gite
Mai, ce joli mois?"

Elvira joined in; so did Stubbs, with a good ear and voice, but an imperfect acquaintance

with the music. Léon and the guitar were equal to the situation. The actor dispensed his throat-notes with prodigality and enthusiasm; and, as he looked up to heaven in his heroic way, tossing the black ringlets, it seemed to him that the very stars contributed a dumb applause to his efforts, and the universe lent him its silence for a chorus. That is one of the best features of the heavenly bodies—that they belong to everybody in particular; and a man like Léon, a chronic Endymion who managed to get along without encouragement, is always the world's centre for himself.

He alone—and, it is to be noted, he was the worst singer of the three—took the music seriously to heart, and judged the serenade from a high artistic point of view. Elvira, on the other hand, was preoccupied about their reception; and as for Stubbs, he considered the whole affair in the light of a broad joke.

"Know you the lair of May, the lovely month?" went the three voices in the turnip-field.

The inhabitants were plainly fluttered; the light moved to and fro, strengthening in one window, paling in another; and then the door was thrown open, and a man in a blouse appeared on the threshold carrying a lamp. He was a powerful young fellow, with bewildered hair and beard, wearing his neck open; his blouse was stained with oil-colours in a harlequinesque disorder; and there was something

rural in the droop and bagginess of his belted trousers.

From immediately behind him, and indeed over his shoulder, a woman's face looked out into the darkness; it was pale and a little weary, although still young; it wore a dwindling, disappearing prettiness, soon to be quite gone, and the expression was both gentle and sour, and reminded one faintly of the taste of certain drugs. For all that, it was not a face to dislike; when the prettiness had vanished, it seemed as if a certain pale beauty might step in to take its place; and as both the mildness and the asperity were characters of youth, it might be hoped that, with years, both would merge into a constant, brave, and not unkindly temper.

"What is all this?" cried the man.

VI

Léon had his hat in his hand at once. He came forward with his customary grace; it was a moment which would have earned him a round of cheering on the stage. Elvira and Stubbs advanced behind him, like a couple of Admetus's sheep following the god Apollo.

"Sir," said Léon, "the hour is unpardonably late, and our little serenade has the air of an impertinence. Believe me, sir, it is an appeal. Monsieur is an artist, I perceive. We are here three artists benighted and without shelter, one a woman—a delicate woman—in evening dress

—in an interesting situation. This will not fail to touch the woman's heart of Madame, whom I perceive indistinctly behind Monsieur her husband, and whose face speaks eloquently of a well-regulated mind. Ah! Monsieur, Madame —one generous movement, and you make three people happy! Two or three hours beside your fire—I ask it of Monsieur in the name of Art—I ask it of Madame by the sanctity of womanhood."

The two, as by a tacit consent, drew back from the door.

"Come in," said the man.

"*Entrez*, Madame," said the woman.

The door opened directly upon the kitchen of the house, which was to all appearance the only sitting-room. The furniture was both plain and scanty; but there were one or two landscapes on the wall handsomely framed, as if they had already visited the committee-rooms of an exhibition and been thence extruded. Léon walked up to the pictures and represented the part of connoisseur before each in turn, with his usual dramatic insight and force. The master of the house, as if irresistibly attracted, followed him from canvas to canvas with the lamp. Elvira was led directly to the fire, where she proceeded to warm herself, while Stubbs stood in the middle of the floor and followed the proceedings of Léon with mild astonishment in his eyes.

"You should see them by daylight," said the artist.

"I promise myself that pleasure," said Léon. "You possess, sir, if you will permit me an observation, the art of composition to a T."

"You are very good," returned the other. "But should you not draw nearer to the fire?"

"With all my heart," said Léon.

And the whole party was soon gathered at the table over a hasty and not an elegant cold supper, washed down with the least of small wines. Nobody liked the meal, but nobody complained; they put a good face upon it, one and all, and made a great clattering of knives and forks. To see Léon eating a single cold sausage was to see a triumph; by the time he had done he had got through as much pantomime as would have sufficed for a baron of beef, and he had the relaxed expression of the over-eaten.

As Elvira had naturally taken a place by the side of Léon, and Stubbs as naturally, although I believe unconsciously, by the side of Elvira, the host and hostess were left together. Yet it was to be noted that they never addressed a word to each other, nor so much as suffered their eyes to meet. The interrupted skirmish still survived in ill feeling; and the instant the guests departed it would break forth again as bitterly as ever. The talk wandered from this to that subject—for with one accord the party had declared it was too late to go to bed; but those two never relaxed toward each other; Goneril and Regan in a sisterly tiff were not more bent on enmity.

It chanced that Elvira was so much tired by all the little excitements of the night that for once she laid aside her company manners, which were both easy and correct, and in the most natural manner in the world leaned her head on Léon's shoulder. At the same time, fatigue suggesting tenderness, she locked the fingers of her right hand into those of her husband's left; and half closing her eyes, dozed off into a golden borderland between sleep and waking. But all the time she was not aware of what was passing, and saw the painter's wife studying her with looks between contempt and envy.

It occurred to Léon that his constitution demanded the use of some tobacco; and he undid his fingers from Elvira's in order to roll a cigarette. It was gently done, and he took care that his indulgence should in no other way disturb his wife's position. But it seemed to catch the eye of the painter's wife with a special significance. She looked straight before her for an instant, and then, with a swift and stealthy movement, took hold of her husband's hand below the table. Alas! she might have spared herself the dexterity. For the poor fellow was so overcome by this caress that he stopped with his mouth open in the middle of a word, and by the expression of his face plainly declared to all the company that his thoughts had been diverted into softer channels.

If it had not been rather amiable, it would have been absurdly droll. His wife at once

withdrew her touch; but it was plain she had to exert some force. Thereupon the young man coloured and looked for a moment beautiful.

Léon and Elvira both observed the by-play, and a shock passed from one to the other; for they were inveterate match-makers, especially between those who were already married.

"I beg your pardon," said Léon, suddenly. "I see no use in pretending. Before we came in here we heard sounds indicating—if I may so express myself—an imperfect harmony."

"Sir——" began the man.

But the woman was beforehand.

"It is quite true," she said. "I see no cause to be ashamed. If my husband is mad I shall at least do my utmost to prevent the consequences. Picture to yourself, Monsieur and Madame," she went on, for she passed Stubbs over, "that this wretched person—a dauber, an incompetent, not fit to be a sign-painter—receives this morning an admirable offer from an uncle—an uncle of my own, my mother's brother, and tenderly beloved—of a clerkship with nearly a hundred and fifty pounds a year, and that he—picture to yourself!—he refuses it! Why? For the sake of Art, he says. Look at his art, I say—look at it! Is it fit to be seen? Ask him—is it fit to be sold? And it is for this, Monsieur and Madame, that he condemns me to the most deplorable existence, without luxuries, without comforts, in a vile suburb of a country town. *O non!*" she cried, "*non—je ne me tairai pas—*

c'est plus fort que moi! I take these gentlemen and this lady for judges—is this kind? is it decent? is it manly? Do I not deserve better at his hands after having married him and"—(a visible hitch)—"done everything in the world to please him."

I doubt if there were ever a more embarrassed company at a table; every one looked like a fool; and the husband like the biggest.

"The art of Monsieur, however," said Elvira, breaking the silence, "is not wanting in distinction."

"It has this distinction," said the wife, "that nobody will buy it."

"I should have supposed a clerkship——" began Stubbs.

"Art is Art," swept in Léon. "I salute Art. It is the beautiful, the divine; it is the spirit of the world, and the pride of life. But——" And the actor paused.

"A clerkship——" began Stubbs.

"I'll tell you what it is," said the painter. "I am an artist, and as this gentleman says, Art is this and the other; but of course, if my wife is going to make my life a piece of perdition all day long, I prefer to go and drown myself out of hand."

"Go!" said his wife. "I should like to see you!"

"I was going to say," resumed Stubbs, "that a fellow may be a clerk and paint almost as much as he likes. I know a fellow in a bank who makes

capital water-colour sketches; he even sold one for seven-and-six."

To both the women this seemed a plank of safety; each hopefully interrogated the countenance of her lord; even Elvira, an artist herself! But, indeed, there must be something permanently mercantile in the female nature. The two men exchanged a glance; it was tragic; not otherwise might two philosophers salute, as at the end of a laborious life each recognised that he was still a mystery to his disciples.

Léon arose.

"Art is Art," he repeated sadly. "It is not water-colour sketches, nor practising on a piano. It is a life to be lived."

"And in the meantime people starve!" observed the woman of the house. "If that's a life, it is not one for me."

"I'll tell you what," burst forth Léon; "you, Madame, go into another room and talk it over with my wife; and I'll stay here and talk it over with your husband. It may come to nothing, but let's try."

"I am very willing," replied the young woman; and she proceeded to light a candle. "This way, if you please." And she led Elvira upstairs into a bedroom. The fact is," said she, sitting down, "that my husband cannot paint."

"No more can mine act," replied Elvira.

"I should have thought he could," returned the other; "he seems clever."

"He is so, and the best of men besides," said Elvira; "but he cannot act."

"At least he is not a sheer humbug, like mine; he can at least sing."

"You mistake Léon," returned his wife, warmly. "He does not even pretend to sing; he has too fine a taste; he does so for a living. And, believe me, neither of the men is a humbug. They are people with a mission—which they cannot carry out."

"Humbug or not," replied the other, "you came very near passing the night in the fields; and, for my part, I live in terror of starvation. I should think it was a man's mission to think twice about his wife. But it appears not. Nothing is their mission but to play the fool. Oh!" she broke out, "is it not something dreary to think of that man of mine? If he could only do it, who would care? But no—not he—no more than I can!"

"Have you any children?" asked Elvira.

"No; but then I may."

"Children change so much," said Elvira, with a sigh.

And just then from the room below there flew up a sudden snapping chord on the guitar; one followed after another; then the voice of Léon joined in; and there was an air being played and sung that stopped the speech of the two women. The wife of the painter stood like a person transfixed; Elvira, looking into her eyes, could see all manner of beautiful memories and

kind thoughts that were passing in and out of her soul with every note; it was a piece of her youth that went before her; a green French plain, the smell of apple-flowers, the far and shining ringlets of a river, and the words and presence of love.

"Léon has hit the nail," thought Elvira to herself. "I wonder how."

The how was plain enough. Léon had asked the painter if there were no air connected with courtship and pleasant times; and having learned what he wished, and allowed an interval to pass, he had soared forth into

"O mon amante,
O mon désir,
Sachons cucillir
L'heure charmante!"

"Pardon me, Madame," said the painter's wife, "your husband sings admirably well."

"He sings that with some feeling," replied Elvira, critically, although she was a little moved herself, for the song cut both ways in the upper chamber; "but it is as an actor and not as a musician."

"Life is very sad," said the other; "it so wastes away under one's fingers."

"I have not found it so," replied Elvira. "I think the good parts of it last and grow greater every day."

"Frankly, how would you advise me?"

"Frankly, I would let my husband do what he

wished. He is obviously a very loving painter; you have not yet tried him as a clerk. And you know—if it were only as the possible father of your children—it is as well to keep him at his best."

"He is an excellent fellow," said the wife.

They kept it up till sunrise with music and all manner of good fellowship; and at sunrise, while the sky was still temperate and clear, they separated on the threshold with a thousand excellent wishes for each other's welfare. Castel-le-Gâchis was beginning to send up its smoke against the golden East; and the church bell was ringing six.

"My guitar is a familiar spirit," said Léon, as he and Elvira took the nearest way toward the inn; "it resuscitated a Commissary, created an English tourist, and reconciled a man and wife."

Stubbs, on his part, went off into the morning with reflections of his own. "They are all mad," thought he; "all mad—but wonderfully decent."

RIP VAN WINKLE

BY

WASHINGTON IRVING

[The following tale was found among the papers of the late Diedrich Knickerbocker, an old gentleman of New York, who was very curious in the Dutch history of the province and the manners of the descendants from its primitive settlers. His historical researches, however, did not lie so much among books as among men; for the former are lamentably scanty on his favourite topics; whereas he found the old burghers, and still more their wives, rich in that legendary lore so invaluable to true history.]

WHOEVER has made a voyage up the Hudson, must remember the Kaatskill mountains. They are a dismembered branch of the great Appalachian family, and are seen away to the west of the river, swelling up to a noble height, and lording it over the surrounding country. Every change of season, every change of weather, indeed every hour of the day, produces some change in the magical hues and shapes of these mountains, and they are regarded by all the good wives, far and near, as perfect barometers. When the weather is fair and settled, they are clothed in blue and purple, and print their bold outlines on the clear evening sky; but sometimes,

when the rest of the landscape is cloudless, they will gather a hood of gray vapours about their summits, which, in the last rays of the setting sun, will glow and light up like a crown of glory.

At the foot of these fairy mountains, the voyager may have descried the light smoke curling up from a village, whose shingle roofs gleam among the trees, just where the blue tints of the upland melt away into the fresh green of the nearer landscape. It is a little village of great antiquity, having been founded by some of the Dutch colonists, in the early times of the province, just about the beginning of the government of the good Peter Stuyvesant (may he rest in peace!), and there were some of the houses of the original settlers standing within a few years, built of small yellow bricks brought from Holland, having latticed windows and gable fronts, surmounted with weathercocks.

In that same village, and in one of these very houses (which, to tell the precise truth, was sadly time-worn and weather-beaten), there lived many years since, while the country was yet a province of Great Britain, a simple, good-natured fellow, of the name of Rip Van Winkle. He was a descendant of the Van Winkles who figured so gallantly in the chivalrous days of Peter Stuyvesant, and accompanied him to the siege of Fort Christina. He inherited, however, but little of the martial character of his ancestors. I have observed that he was a simple, good-natured man; he was, moreover,

a kind neighbour, and an obedient, henpecked husband. Indeed, to the latter circumstance might be owing that meekness of spirit which gained him such universal popularity; for those men are most apt to be obsequious and conciliating abroad who are under the discipline of shrews at home. Their tempers, doubtless, are rendered pliant and malleable in the fiery furnace of domestic tribulation, and a curtain lecture is worth all the sermons in the world for teaching the virtues of patience and long-suffering. A termagant wife may, therefore, in some respects, be considered a tolerable blessing; and if so, Rip Van Winkle was thrice blessed.

Certain it is, that he was a great favourite among all the good wives of the village, who, as usual with the amiable sex, took his part in all family squabbles; and never failed, whenever they talked those matters over in their evening gossipings, to lay all the blame on Dame Van Winkle. The children of the village, too, would shout with joy whenever he approached. He assisted at their sports, made their playthings, taught them to fly kites and shoot marbles, and told them long stories of ghosts, witches, and Indians. Whenever he went dodging about the village, he was surrounded by a troop of them, hanging on his skirts, clambering on his back, and playing a thousand tricks on him with impunity; and not a dog would bark at him throughout the neighbourhood.

The great error in Rip's composition was an

insuperable aversion to all kinds of profitable labour. It could not be from the want of assiduity or perseverance; for he would sit on a wet rock, with a rod as long and heavy as a Tartar's lance, and fish all day without a murmur, even though he should not be encouraged by a single nibble. He would carry a fowling-piece on his shoulder for hours together, trudging through woods and swamps, and up hill and down dale, to shoot a few squirrels or wild pigeons. He would never refuse to assist a neighbour even in the roughest toil, and was a foremost man at all country frolics for husking Indian corn, or building stone fences; the women of the village, too, used to employ him to run their errands, and to do such little odd jobs as their less obliging husbands would not do for them. In a word, Rip was ready to attend to anybody's business but his own; but as to doing family duty, and keeping his farm in order, he found it impossible.

In fact, he declared it was of no use to work on his farm; it was the most pestilent little piece of ground in the whole country; everything about it went wrong, and would go wrong, in spite of him. His fences were continually falling to pieces; his cow would either go astray or get among the cabbages; weeds were sure to grow quicker in his fields than anywhere else; the rain always made a point of setting in just as he had some outdoor work to do; so that, though his patrimonial estate had dwindled

away under his management, acre by acre, until there was little more left than a mere patch of Indian corn and potatoes, yet it was the worst conditioned farm in the neighbourhood.

His children, too, were as ragged and wild as if they belonged to nobody. His son Rip, an urchin begotten in his own likeness, promised to inherit the habits, with the old clothes, of his father. He was generally seen trooping like a colt, at his mother's heels, equipped in a pair of his father's cast-off galligaskins, which he had much ado to hold up with one hand, as a fine lady does her train in bad weather.

Rip Van Winkle, however, was one of those happy mortals, of foolish, well-oiled dispositions, who take the world easy, eat white bread or brown, whichever can be got with least thought or trouble, and would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound. If left to himself, he would have whistled life away, in perfect contentment; but his wife kept continually dinning in his ears about his idleness, his carelessness, and the ruin he was bringing on his family. Morning, noon, and night, her tongue was incessantly going, and everything he said or did was sure to produce a torrent of household eloquence. Rip had but one way of replying to all lectures of the kind, and that, by frequent use, had grown into a habit. He shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, cast up his eyes, but said nothing. This, however, always provoked a fresh volley from his wife; so that he was fain to draw off his

forces, and take to the outside of the house—the only side which, in truth, belongs to a henpecked husband.

Rip's sole domestic adherent was his dog Wolf, who was as much henpecked as his master; for Dame Van Winkle regarded them as companions in idleness, and even looked upon Wolf with an evil eye, as the cause of his master's going so often astray. True it is, in all points of spirit befitting an honourable dog, he was as courageous an animal as ever scoured the woods —but what courage can withstand the ever-during and all-besetting terrors of a woman's tongue? The moment Wolf entered the house his crest fell, his tail drooped to the ground or curled between his legs, he sneaked about with a gallows air, casting many a sidelong glance at Dame Van Winkle, and at the least flourish of a broomstick or ladle he would fly to the door with yelping precipitation.

Times grew worse and worse with Rip Van Winkle as years of matrimony rolled on; a tart temper never mellows with age, and a sharp tongue is the only edge tool that grows keener with constant use. For a long while he used to console himself, when driven from home, by frequenting a kind of perpetual club of the sages, philosophers, and other idle personages of the village; which held its sessions on a bench before a small inn, designated by a rubicund portrait of his Majesty George the Third. Here they used to sit in the shade, of a long lazy

summer's day, talk listlessly over village gossip, or tell endless, sleepy stories about nothing. But it would have been worth any statesman's money to have heard the profound discussions that sometimes took place, when by chance an old newspaper fell into their hands, from some passing traveller. How solemnly they would listen to the contents, as drawled out by Derrick Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, a dapper learned little man, who was not to be daunted by the most gigantic word in the dictionary! And how sagely they would deliberate upon public events some months after they had taken place!

The opinions of this junto were completely controlled by Nicholas Vedder, a patriarch of the village, and landlord of the inn, at the door of which he took his seat from morning till night, just moving sufficiently to avoid the sun, and keep in the shade of a large tree; so that the neighbours could tell the hour by his movements as accurately as by a sun-dial. It is true, he was rarely heard to speak, but smoked his pipe incessantly. His adherents, however (for every great man has his adherents), perfectly understood him, and knew how to gather his opinions. When anything that was read or related displeased him, he was observed to smoke his pipe vehemently, and send forth short, frequent, and angry puffs; but when pleased, he would inhale the smoke slowly and tranquilly, and emit it in light and placid clouds, and sometimes, taking

the pipe from his mouth, and letting the fragrant vapour curl about his nose, would gravely nod his head in token of perfect approbation.

From even this stronghold the unlucky Rip was at length routed by his termagant wife, who would suddenly break in upon the tranquillity of the assemblage and call the members all to naught. Nor was that august personage, Nicholas Vedder himself, sacred from the daring tongue of this terrible virago, who charged him outright with encouraging her husband in habits of idleness.

Poor Rip was at last reduced almost to despair, and his only alternative to escape from the labour of the farm and the clamour of his wife was to take gun in hand and stroll away into the woods. Here he would sometimes seat himself at the foot of a tree, and share the contents of his wallet with Wolf, with whom he sympathised as a fellow-sufferer in persecution. "Poor Wolf," he would say, "thy mistress leads thee a dog's life of it; but never mind, my lad, whilst I live thou shalt never want a friend to stand by thee!" Wolf would wag his tail, look wistfully in his master's face, and if dogs can feel pity, I verily believe he reciprocated the sentiment with all his heart.

In a long ramble of the kind on a fine autumnal day, Rip had unconsciously scrambled to one of the highest parts of the Kaatskill mountains. He was after his favourite sport of squirrel-shooting, and the still solitudes had echoed and

reëchoed with the reports of his gun. Panting and fatigued, he threw himself, late in the afternoon, on a green knoll, covered with mountain herbage, that crowned the brow of a precipice. From an opening between the trees he could overlook all the lower country for many a mile of rich woodland. He saw at a distance the lordly Hudson, far, far below him, moving on its silent but majestic course, with the reflection of a purple cloud, or the sail of a lagging bark, here and there sleeping on its glassy bosom, and at last losing itself in the blue highlands.

On the other side he looked down into a deep mountain glen, wild, lonely, and shagged, the bottom filled with fragments from the impending cliffs, and scarcely lighted by the reflected rays of the setting sun. For some time Rip lay musing on this scene; evening was gradually advancing; the mountains began to throw their long blue shadows over the valleys; he saw that it would be dark long before he could reach the village, and he heaved a heavy sigh when he thought of encountering the terrors of Dame Van Winkle.

As he was about to descend, he heard a voice from a distance, hallooing, "Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!" He looked around, but could see nothing but a crow winging its solitary flight across the mountain. He thought his fancy must have deceived him, and turned again to descend, when he heard the same cry ring through the still evening air: "Rip Van Winkle!

Rip Van Winkle!" At the same time Wolf bristled up his back and, giving a low growl, skulked to his master's side, looking fearfully down into the glen. Rip now felt a vague apprehension stealing over him; he looked anxiously in the same direction, and perceived a strange figure slowly toiling up the rocks, and bending under the weight of something he carried on his back. He was surprised to see any human being in this lonely and unfrequented place, but supposing it to be some one of the neighbourhood in need of his assistance, he hastened down to yield it.

On nearer approach, he was still more surprised at the singularity of the stranger's appearance. He was a short, square-built old fellow, with thick, bushy hair and a grizzled beard. His dress was of the antique Dutch fashion: a cloth jerkin strapped round the waist, several pairs of breeches, the outer one of ample volume, decorated with rows of buttons down the sides, and bunches at the knees. He bore on his shoulder a stout keg, that seemed full of liquor, and made signs for Rip to approach and assist him with the load. Though rather shy and distrustful of this new acquaintance, Rip complied with his usual alacrity, and mutually relieving each other, they clambered up a narrow gully, apparently the dry bed of a mountain torrent. As they ascended, Rip every now and then heard long, rolling peals, like distant thunder, that seemed to issue out of a deep

ravine, or rather cleft, between lofty rocks, toward which their rugged path conducted. He paused for an instant, but supposing it to be the muttering of one of those transient thunder showers which often take place in mountain heights, he proceeded. Passing through the ravine, they came to a hollow, like a small amphitheatre, surrounded by perpendicular precipices over the brinks of which impending trees shot their branches, so that you only caught glimpses of the azure sky, and the bright evening cloud. During the whole time Rip and his companion had laboured on in silence; for though the former marvelled greatly what could be the object of carrying a keg of liquor up this wild mountain, yet there was something strange and incomprehensible about the unknown, that inspired awe and checked familiarity.

On entering the amphitheatre, new objects of wonder presented themselves. On a level spot in the centre was a company of odd-looking personages playing at nine-pins. They were dressed in a quaint, outlandish fashion: some wore short doublets, others jerkins, with long knives in their belts, and most of them had enormous breeches, of similar style with that of the guide's. Their visages, too, were peculiar, one had a large head, broad face, and small, pig-gish eyes; the face of another seemed to consist entirely of nose, and was surmounted by a white sugarloaf hat set off with a little red cock's tail. They all had beards, of various shapes and

colours. There was one who seemed to be the commander. He was a stout old gentleman, with a weather-beaten countenance; he wore a laced doublet, broad belt and hanger, high-crowned hat and feather, red stockings, and high-heeled shoes, with roses in them. The whole group reminded Rip of the figures in an old Flemish painting, in the parlour of Dominie Van Shaick, the village parson, and which had been brought over from Holland at the time of the settlement.

What seemed particularly odd to Rip was, that though these folks were evidently amusing themselves, yet they maintained the gravest faces, the most mysterious silence, and were, withal, the most melancholy party of pleasure he had ever witnessed. Nothing interrupted the stillness of the scene but the noise of the balls, which, whenever they were rolled, echoed along the mountains like rumbling peals of thunder.

As Rip and his companion approached them, they suddenly desisted from their play, and stared at him with such fixed, statue-like gaze, and such strange, uncouth, lack-lustre countenances, that his heart turned within him and his knees smote together. His companion now emptied the contents of the keg into large flagons and made signs to him to wait upon the company. He obeyed with fear and trembling; they quaffed the liquor in profound silence, and then returned to their game.

By degrees Rip's awe and apprehension subsided. He even ventured, when no eye was fixed upon him, to taste the beverage, which he found had much of the flavour of excellent Hollands. He was naturally a thirsty soul, and was soon tempted to repeat the draught. One taste provoked another, and he repeated his visits to the flagon so often, that at length his senses were overpowered, his eyes swam in his head, his head gradually declined, and he fell into a deep sleep.

On waking, he found himself on the green knoll wherefrom he had first seen the old man of the glen. He rubbed his eyes. It was a bright, sunny morning; the birds were hopping and twittering among the bushes, and an eagle was wheeling aloft, breasting the pure mountain breeze. "Surely," thought Rip, "I have not slept here all night." He recalled the occurrences before he fell asleep. The strange man with a keg of liquor—the mountain ravine—the wild retreat among the rocks—the woe-begone party at nine-pins—the flagon—"Oh! that flagon! that wicked flagon!" thought Rip. "What excuse shall I make to Dame Van Winkle?"

He looked around for his gun, but in place of the clean, well-oiled fowling-piece, he found an old firelock lying by him, the barrel encrusted with rust, and lock falling off, and the stock worm-eaten. He now suspected that the grave roysterers of the mountain had put a trick upon him, and, having dosed him with liquor, had

robbed him of his gun. Wolf, too, had disappeared, but he might have strayed away after a squirrel or partridge. He whistled after him and shouted his name, but all in vain; the echoes repeated his whistle and shout, but no dog was to be seen.

He determined to revisit the scene of the last evening's gambol, and if he met with any of the party, to demand his dog and gun. As he rose to walk he found himself stiff in the joints, and wanting in his usual activity. "These mountain beds do not agree with me," thought Rip, "and if this frolic should lay me up with a fit of the rheumatism, I shall have a blessed time with Dame Van Winkle." With some difficulty he got down into the glen. He found the gully up which he and his companion had ascended the preceding evening, but to his astonishment a mountain stream was now foaming down it, leaping from rock to rock, and filling the glen with babbling murmurs. He, however, made shift to scramble up its sides, working his toilsome way through thickets of birch, sassafras, and witch-hazel, and sometimes tripped up or entangled by the wild grape-vines that twisted their coils and tendrils from tree to tree, and spread a kind of network in his path.

At length he reached to where the ravine had opened through the cliffs, to the amphitheatre; but no traces of such opening remained. The rocks presented a high, impenetrable wall, over which the torrent came tumbling in a sheet of

feathery foam, and fell into a broad deep basin, black from the shadows of the surrounding forest. Here, then, poor Rip was brought to a stand. He again called and whistled after his dog; he was only answered by the cawing of a flock of idle crows, sporting high in air about a dry tree that overhung a sunny precipice, and which, secure in their elevation, seemed to look down and scoff at the poor man's perplexities. What was to be done? The morning was passing away, and Rip felt famished for want of his breakfast. He grieved to give up his dog and gun; he dreaded to meet his wife; but it would not do to starve among the mountains. He shook his head, shouldered the rusty firelock, and, with a heart full of trouble and anxiety, turned his steps homeward.

As he approached the village he met a number of people, but none whom he knew, which somewhat surprised him, for he had thought himself acquainted with every one in the country round. Their dress, too, was of a different fashion from that to which he was accustomed. They all stared at him with equal marks of surprise, and whenever they cast eyes upon him, invariably stroked their chins. The constant recurrence of this gesture induced Rip, involuntarily, to do the same, when, to his astonishment, he found his beard had grown a foot long!

He had now entered the skirts of the village. A troop of strange children ran at his heels,

hooting after him, and pointing at his gray beard. The dogs, too, not one of which he recognised for an old acquaintance, barked at him as he passed. The very village was altered: it was larger and more populous. There were rows of houses which he had never seen before, and those which had been his familiar haunts had disappeared. Strange names were over the doors—strange faces at the windows—everything was strange. His mind now misgave him; he began to doubt whether both he and the world around him were not bewitched. Surely this was his native village, which he had left but the day before. There stood the Kaatskill mountains—there ran the silver Hudson at a distance—there was every hill and dale precisely as it had always been. Rip was sorely perplexed. "That flagon last night," thought he, "has addled my poor head sadly!"

It was with some difficulty that he found the way to his own house, which he approached with silent awe, expecting every moment to hear the shrill voice of Dame Van Winkle. He found the house gone to decay—the roof fallen in, the windows shattered, and the doors off the hinges. A half-starved dog, that looked like Wolf, was skulking about it. Rip called him by name, but the cur snarled, showed his teeth, and passed on. This was an unkind cut indeed. "My very dog," sighed poor Rip, "has forgotten me!"

He entered the house, which, to tell the truth, Dame Van Winkle had always kept in neat order.

It was empty, forlorn, and apparently abandoned. This desolateness overcame all his connubial fears. He called loudly for his wife and children; the lonely chambers rang for a moment with his voice, and then all again was silence.

He now hurried forth, and hastened to his old resort, the village inn—but it too was gone. A large rickety wooden building stood in its place, with great gaping windows, some of them broken, and mended with old hats and petticoats, and over the door was painted, "The Union Hotel, by Jonathan Doolittle." Instead of the great tree that used to shelter the quiet little Dutch inn of yore, there now was reared a tall naked pole, with something on the top that looked like a red night-cap, and from it was fluttering a flag, on which was a singular assemblage of stars and stripes. All this was strange and incomprehensible. He recognised on the sign, however, the ruby face of King George, under which he had smoked so many a peaceful pipe, but even this was singularly metamorphosed. The red coat was changed for one of blue and buff, a sword was held in the hand instead of a sceptre, the head was decorated with a cocked hat, and underneath was painted in large characters, GENERAL WASHINGTON.

There was, as usual, a crowd of folk about the door, but none that Rip recollected. The very character of the people seemed changed. There was a busy, bustling, disputatious tone about

it, instead of the accustomed phlegm and drowsy tranquillity. He looked in vain for the sage Nicholas Vedder, with his broad face, double chin, and fair, long pipe, uttering clouds of tobacco smoke instead of idle speeches; or Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, doling forth the contents of an ancient newspaper. In place of these, a lean, bilious-looking fellow, with his pockets full of handbills, was haranguing vehemently about rights of citizens—election—members of Congress—liberty—Bunker's Hill—heroes of seventy-six—and other words that were a perfect Babylonish jargon to the bewildered Van Winkle.

The appearance of Rip, with his long, grizzled beard, his rusty fowling-piece, his uncouth dress, and the army of women and children that had gathered at his heels, soon attracted the attention of the tavern politicians. They crowded round him, eyeing him from head to foot, with great curiosity. The orator bustled up to him, and drawing him partly aside, inquired "on which side he voted." Rip stared in vacant stupidity. Another short but busy little fellow pulled him by the arm, and rising on tip-toe, inquired in his ear "whether he was Federal or Democrat." Rip was equally at a loss to comprehend the question, when a knowing, self-important old gentleman in a sharp cocked hat made his way through the crowd, putting them to the right and left with his elbows as he passed, and planting himself before Van Winkle, with one arm

akimbo, the other resting on his cane, his keen eyes and sharp hat penetrating, as it were, into his very soul, demanded, in an austere tone, "what brought him to the election with a gun on his shoulder, and a mob at his heels, and whether he meant to breed a riot in the village?" "Alas! gentlemen," cried Rip, somewhat dismayed, "I am a poor, quiet man, a native of the place, and a loyal subject of the King, God bless him!"

Here a general shout burst from the bystanders: "A tory! A tory! A spy! A refugee! Hustle him! Away with him!" It was with great difficulty that the self-important man in the cocked hat restored order, and, having assumed a tenfold austerity of brow, he demanded again of the unknown culprit what he came there for, and whom he was seeking. The poor man humbly assured him that he meant no harm, but merely came there in search of some of his neighbours, who used to keep about the tavern.

"Well—who are they? Name them."

Rip bethought himself a moment, and inquired, "Where's Nicholas Vedder?"

There was silence for a little while, when an old man replied, in a thin piping voice: "Nicholas Vedder? why, he is dead and gone these eighteen years! There was a wooden tombstone in the church-yard that used to tell all about him, but that's rotted and gone too."

"Where's Brom Dutcher?"

"Oh, he went off to the army in the beginning of the war. Some say he was killed at the storming of Stony Point, others say he was drowned in a squall at the foot of Anthony's Nose. I don't know—he never came back again."

"Where's Van Bummel, the schoolmaster?"

"He went off to the wars too, was a great militia general, and is now in Congress."

Rip's heart died away at hearing of these sad changes in his home and friends, and finding himself thus alone in the world. Every answer puzzled him, too, by treating of such enormous lapses of time, and of matters which he could not understand: war—Congress—Stony Point. He had no courage to ask after any more friends, but cried out in despair, "Does nobody here know Rip Van Winkle?"

"Oh, Rip Van Winkle!" exclaimed two or three. "Oh, to be sure! that's Rip Van Winkle yonder, leaning against the tree."

Rip looked, and beheld a precise counterpart of himself as he went up the mountain: apparently as lazy, and certainly as ragged. The poor fellow was now completely confounded. He doubted his own identity, and whether he was himself or another man. In the midst of his bewilderment, the man in the cocked hat demanded who he was, and what was his name?

"God knows," exclaimed he, at his wit's end; "I'm not myself—I'm somebody else—that's me yonder—no—that's somebody else, got into

my shoes—I was myself last night, but I fell asleep on the mountain, and they've changed my gun, and everything's changed, and I'm changed, and I can't tell what's my name, or who I am!"

The bystanders began now to look at each other, nod, wink significantly, and tap their fingers against their foreheads. There was a whisper, also, about securing the gun, and keeping the old fellow from doing mischief, at the very suggestion of which the self-important man in the cocked hat retired with some precipitation. At this critical moment a fresh, likely looking woman pressed through the throng to get a peep at the gray-bearded man. She had a chubby child in her arms, which, frightened at his looks, began to cry. "Hush, Rip," cried she, "hush, you little fool, the old man won't hurt you." The name of the child, the air of the mother, the tone of her voice, all awakened a train of recollection in his mind. "What is your name, my good woman?" asked he.

"Judith Gardenier."

"And your father's name?"

"Ah, poor man, his name was Rip Van Winkle; it's twenty years since he went away from home with his gun, and never has been heard of since. His dog came home without him, but whether he shot himself, or was carried away by the Indians, nobody can tell. I was then but a little girl."

Rip had but one question more to ask; but he put it with a faltering voice:

"Where's your mother?"

Oh, she too had died but a short time since; she broke a blood-vessel in a fit of passion at a New England pedlar.

There was a drop of comfort, at least, in this intelligence. The honest man could contain himself no longer. He caught his daughter and her child in his arms. "I am your father!" cried he; "young Rip Van Winkle once—old Rip Van Winkle now! Does nobody know poor Rip Van Winkle?"

All stood amazed, until an old woman, tottering out from among the crowd, put her hand to her brow, and peering under it in his face for a moment, exclaimed, "Sure enough! it is Rip Van Winkle—it is himself! Welcome home again, old neighbour. Why, where have you been these twenty long years?"

Rip's story was soon told, for the whole twenty years had been to him as one night. The neighbours stared when they heard it; some were seen to wink at each other, and put their tongues in their cheeks. And the self-important man in the cocked hat, who, when the alarm was over, had returned to the field, screwed down the corners of his mouth, and shook his head—upon which there was a general shaking of the head throughout the assemblage

It was determined, however, to take the opinion of old Peter Vanderdonk, who was seen

slowly advancing up the road. He was a descendant of the historian of that name, who wrote one of the earliest accounts of the province. Peter was the most ancient inhabitant of the village, and well versed in all the wonderful events and traditions of the neighbourhood. He recollected Rip at once, and corroborated his story in the most satisfactory manner. He assured the company that it was a fact, handed down from his ancestor the historian, that the Kaatskill mountains had always been haunted by strange beings. That it was affirmed that the great Hendrik Hudson, the first discoverer of the river and country, kept a kind of vigil there every twenty years, with his crew of the *Half-moon*, being permitted in this way to revisit the scenes of his enterprise, and keep a guardian eye upon the river, and the great city called by his name. That his father had once seen them in their old Dutch dresses playing at nine-pins in a hollow of the mountain; and that he himself had heard, one summer afternoon, the sound of their balls like distant peals of thunder.

To make a long story short, the company broke up, and returned to the more important concerns of the election. Rip's daughter took him home to live with her: she had a snug, well-furnished house, and a stout, cheery farmer for a husband, whom Rip recollected for one of the urchins that used to climb upon his back. As to Rip's son and heir, who was the ditto of

himself, seen leaning against the tree, he was employed to work on the farm, but evinced an hereditary disposition to attend to anything else but his business.

Rip now resumed his old walks and habits: he soon found many of his former cronies, though all rather the worse for the wear and tear of time, and preferred making friends among the rising generation, with whom he soon grew into great favour.

Having nothing to do at home, and being arrived at that happy age when a man can do nothing with impunity, he took his place once more on the bench, at the inn door, and was reverenced as one of the patriarchs of the village, and a chronicle of the old times "before the war." It was some time before he could get into the regular track of gossip, or could be made to comprehend the strange events that had taken place during his torpor. How that there had been a revolutionary war—that the country had thrown off the yoke of old England—and that, instead of being a subject of his Majesty George the Third, he was now a free citizen of the United States. Rip, in fact, was no politician; the changes of states and empires made but little impression on him. But there was one species of despotism under which he had long groaned, and that was—petticoat government. Happily, that was at an end; he had got his neck out of the yoke of matrimony, and could go in and out whenever he pleased, without dreading

the tyranny of Dame Van Winkle. Whenever her name was mentioned, however, he shook his head, shrugged his shoulders, and cast up his eyes, which might pass either for an expression of resignation to his fate, or joy at his deliverance.

He used to tell his story to every stranger that arrived at Mr. Doolittle's hotel. He was observed, at first, to vary on some points every time he told it, which was, doubtless, owing to his having so recently awaked. It at last settled down precisely to the tale I have related, and not a man, woman, or child in the neighbourhood but knew it by heart. Some always pretended to doubt the reality of it, and insisted that Rip had been out of his head, and that this was one point on which he always remained flighty. The old Dutch inhabitants, however, almost universally gave it full credit. Even to this day they never hear a thunder-storm of a summer afternoon, about the Kaatskill, but they say Hendrik Hudson and his crew are at their game of nine-pins. And it is a common wish of all henpecked husbands in the neighbourhood, when life hangs heavy on their hands, that they might have a quieting draught out of Rip Van Winkle's flagon.

[The foregoing tale, one would suspect, had been suggested to Mr. Knickerbocker by a little German superstition about the Emperor Frederick *der Rothbart*, and the Kypphauser mountain. The subjoined note, however, which he had appended to the tale, shows that it is an absolute fact, narrated with his usual fidelity:

"The story of Rip Van Winkle may seem incredible to many, but nevertheless I give it my full belief, for I know the vicinity of our old Dutch settlements to have been very subject to marvellous events and appearances. Indeed, I have heard many stranger stories than this, in the villages along the Hudson, all of which were too well authenticated to admit of a doubt. I have even talked with Rip Van Winkle myself, who, when last I saw him, was a very venerable old man, and so perfectly rational and consistent on every other point, that I think no conscientious person could refuse to take this into the bargain. Nay, I have seen a certificate on the subject taken before a country justice, and signed with a cross, in the justice's own handwriting. The story, therefore, is beyond the possibility of doubt.—D. K."]